













# MADAME ROLAND

BY

MATHILDE BLIND

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# MADAME ROLAND.

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## CHAPTER I.

### CHILDHOOD.

MARIE-JEANNE PHILIPON, renowned as Madame Roland, was born in Paris, March 17, 1754, in a house on the Quai de l'Horloge, near the Pont Neuf. She was thus just the same age as Louis XVI., and about a year older than Marie Antoinette. It would be difficult to find more common-place surroundings than those amidst which one of the greatest of Frenchwomen was ushered into the world.

That a daughter of shepherds and rustics should have become the saviour of her country is not surprising. For the primitive simplicity of those occupations seems the proper nursery of heroism. But it is surprising that in the Paris of Louis XV., from the unimaginative class of small shopkeepers, there should suddenly spring a child, in soul the heiress of the great men of antiquity.

But the actual parents were far from suspecting the



native land of the little traveller that was born to them. They had probably never heard of Aristides the Just and Brutus the Tyrannicide. Gatien Phlipon, a chaser and worker in enamel, carried on a pretty thriving business ; for this was the time when elaborately engraved watches, snuff-boxes, and shoe-buckles were so much sought after, the designs often being works of art in their way. M. Phlipon employed several apprentices, and was successful as long as he applied himself steadily to his calling. A restless wish to make money and rise in the world was, however, attended with the opposite results. Constantly engaged in speculation, such as buying diamonds to resell at a profit, he neglected his business only to lose money in that as also in his other ventures. He was tall and good-looking, proud of his personal advantages, and in every way a gay, vain, quick-witted and pleasure-loving Parisian.

Marguerite Bimont, his wife, in most respects his exact opposite, was a woman of the highest rectitude, and of an almost saintly purity of life. Firm yet gentle, of reserved and dignified manners, her retiring habits formed a strong contrast to those of her neighbours. She rarely received visitors, and never stirred from home except to visit her aged mother or her husband's relatives, or to go to church. No doubt that her example exercised a powerful influence on her daughter's character.

Marie-Jeanne, or Manon, as she was familiarly called, was the second of seven children, of whom all but herself died in infancy. According to French custom she was put out to nurse, and the first two years of her life were passed in the neighbourhood of Arpajon, in the care of a buxom, kindly young country-woman,

who conceived the greatest affection for her charge, and never lost sight of her in after life. At the age of two Manon was taken home by her parents, a thorough little rustic brimming over with health and spirits. She was never taught to read, but had mastered that accomplishment at the mature age of four, when, according to her, the chief business of her education might be regarded as finished, so assiduously did she thenceforth devote herself to study. Let her only have books and flowers, and she wanted nothing else. She was a thoughtful, affectionate child, lively without being boisterous, and easily amenable to reason; but, however tractable, violence or threats made her proportionately obstinate. The severest punishment her mother ever found it necessary to inflict was to address her as "Mademoiselle," accompanying the word by a certain look and tone of voice. Not so her father. A man of hasty and violent temper, he sometimes had recourse to physical chastisement, which never failed to raise a spirit of intense resistance in his daughter.

One such scene made an indelible impression on the future Madame Roland. She was then six years old, and happened to be suffering from some childish ailment. Her mother had poured out the prescribed dose of physic, and was holding it to her lips. Disgusted by the smell, the child involuntarily drew back, but, at the mother's gentle remonstrance, made ineffectual efforts to swallow the unsavoury draught. In the meanwhile the father had come in, and taking Manon's aversion for obstinacy, he got very angry, seized hold of the whip, and began beating her. From that moment she lost all desire to obey, and declared that she would not take the

medicine. Her father administered whipping the second ; uttering loud screams, she now tried to upset the glass. A movement betraying this intention, enraged her father completely, and he threatened to whip her for the third time. From that moment a sudden and violent revulsion of feeling took place in Manon. Her sobs ceased, she dried her tears, all her faculties became concentrated in an intense effort of will: She rose from her bed, turned to the wall, and nerved herself to receive the blows in silence. "They might have killed me on the spot," she says in her famous Memoirs, penned in a prison within a stone's-throw of the scaffold, "without my uttering so much as a sigh; nor will it cost me more to-day to ascend the guillotine than it did then to yield to a barbarous treatment which might have killed but not conquered me."

This was her father's last effort at education. Not that he was habitually unkind or cruel in his treatment of his only child. On the contrary, he idolized his daughter, especially in her early girlhood, when his susceptible vanity was flattered by the attention she attracted. His method of dealing with her must be laid to the charge of the manners of the times, severe and harsh to children, where not modified by exceptional refinement of nature. However, as we have said, M. Philpon henceforth wisely avoided pitting his will against his daughter's, and entirely left her guidance to the wise and loving hands of his wife. But he was very proud of the child's precocious intelligence, and for her station and years she had an array of masters which goes far to prove that her parents must have considered hers a very exceptional nature.

At seven years of age Manon was sent every Sunday

to attend catechism, as it was called, in order to prepare her for confirmation. This examination was commonly held in a church or chapel where a few benches were placed in a corner, and was principally held for children of the poorer classes; but as her uncle, the Abbé Bimont, an amiable, kind-hearted priest, was at that time in charge of this class, her mother judged it well for her to attend, especially as she felt sure that her daughter's memory would always secure her the first place.

On one of these occasions the rector put in an appearance; and in order to show off his superior theological learning, he asked Manon, with ill-concealed triumph, how many orders of spirits there were in the celestial hierarchy. And the terrible child answered, nothing daunted, that there were nine—as might be learned from the preface to the Missal—as angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, &c. She was already deeply versed in the Bible, as well as in the psalter, the only books to be found at her grandmother's house. This old lady, whom her mother took her to see every Sunday after vespers, was in her dotage, to the poor child's bewilderment. She invariably sat in the same chair, by the window in summer and in winter near the fire-place, and gave no signs of animation except such as might emanate from a vindictive old fairy. For instance, when her grandchild, in high spirits, skipped about the room, she invariably burst into tears; but no sooner did she have a fall or knock herself than the palsied dame showed her merriment by a hoarse chuckling laugh. Such conduct was naturally calculated to hurt Manon's feelings; but her mother eventually made her understand that these visits were a duty not to be dispensed with.

Manon's love of reading and thirst for knowledge used to hurry her out of bed at five in the morning. Barefooted, she would steal to her mother's room where her books lay on a table, and do her lessons with such eagerness that her progress took her masters by surprise. Among these we hear of an anomalous sort of personage who had successively figured as chorister-boy, soldier, deserter, capuchin, and discharged clerk, and had come up penniless from the country with a wife and three children. This Jack-of-all-trades, who rejoiced in a fine falsetto voice, was employed to teach her singing, freely borrowing money of her parents the while, and finally disappearing in Russia. Her dancing master, a Savoyard, was wizened, snub-nosed, frightfully ugly, and with a wen on his cheek which showed to advantage as with his chin he nipped his pocket viol. Fourthly, there was a gigantic Spaniard, with hairy hands like Esau, who gave her lessons on the guitar; and, finally, a timid man of fifty, with rubicund face, who taught her to play on the violoncello. As the latter only instructed her for a short time, a Reverend Father Colomb enters on the scene who, to console her, occasionally used to send over his violoncello to accompany her guitar. Besides all this, her uncle used to teach her some Latin; while her father, to complete the curriculum, made her learn drawing and the use of the graving tool.

But the real business of education, as before mentioned, consisted not so much in these lessons as in her insatiable reading of all the books she could find, consisting chiefly of standard works, few in number but of excellent quality. After having devoured all those belonging to her parents, she came one day, while ferreting about the house, on a fresh store which lasted

her for a long while. This happy find belonged to one of her father's apprentices named Courson, who in the course of time became tutor to the pages at Versailles. This studious young man always kept a certain number of volumes in a little hiding-place of his own in her father's *atelier*. Now this *atelier* adjoined a good-sized room, resplendent with looking-glasses and pictures, where Manon was in the habit of having her lessons. A recess on one side of the mantel-piece admitted of a closet being fenced off from the main room, furnished with bedstead, table, chair, and a few shelves, which till within a year of her marriage served her at once for bedroom and study. From this nook, as a mouse from its hole, the child would noiselessly sally forth when work was at a stand-still, and, seizing one of the precious books, would quickly dart back to her retreat. Here, elbow on table and cheek resting on her left hand, what wonderful voyages of discovery did she not make into far lands and backward centuries! Descriptions of travel were her delight, pathetic stories deeply touched her; but one day there fell into her hands a book that kindled in her a new life.

This book was Plutarch. The humble little closet on the Quai de l'Horloge was changed into a temple where the best and bravest of men again became incarnate in the shaping imagination of a visionary child. Who can precisely explain or define that strong historic grasp, which is almost like a sixth sense, and seems inborn with some children. Give to such a one a history of Rome, and it comes with a power and a passion and a haunting reality as of memories called up from an obliterated past. Plutarch became a landmark in the life of Manon Phlipon. She carried the volume about with her everywhere; she absorbed its

contents; she took it to church with her. This was in Lent 1763, when she was barely nine. Without knowing it she had become a Republican, and would often weep at not being a native of Sparta or Rome. Henceforth she was ripe for the Revolution.

By-and-by she became absorbed in *Telemachus* and in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*. She used to put herself in the place of the fictitious heroines; and while fancying herself Eucharis or Erminia, her heart used to beat and her voice to falter with emotion. Sometimes her mother would request her to read from one or other of these books, but there were certain passages which she felt so acutely that no entreaties would have prevailed on her to utter them aloud. Having on one occasion observed her mother reading one of the identical works which she had previously perused with considerable inward misgivings, she now went more openly to work in her studies, and the obliging young apprentice seemed to buy books on purpose for her to read.

Voltaire followed next in order; and on one occasion the little girl was discovered by a stout, forbidding old lady, who had come to call on her mother, deeply engrossed in *Candide*! Solemn remonstrances being addressed by this officious visitor to Madame Phlipon, the child was ordered to put the book back in its place. In spite of this momentary prohibition, her parents never in any way interfered with her reading, unless the mother kept Rousseau out of her reach, which Madame Roland thought possible, as, with the former's deep knowledge of her daughter, she would apprehend no really bad influence from the writings of Voltaire, while dreading that of Rousseau on her susceptible temperament. Whether from design or accident,

Manon only became acquainted with the latter's works after her mother's death, and they made as great an epoch in her life at one-and-twenty as Plutarch had done at nine.

These grave studies were occasionally varied by a walk in the Tuileries Gardens on Sunday afternoons. Her mother loved to dress her as if she had been a doll. Though herself very simply attired, she spared no expense in the little girl's bravery, and would deck her out in a fashionable silk *corps-de-robe*, fitting tightly and displaying the figure to advantage, while made full below the waist and sweeping in a long train behind. These gala days were anything but festive to the studious Manon; for she used to shrink from the hair-dressing operations which often forced tears from her eyes. On such occasions her dark abundant locks would be pulled about and put into curl-papers, and frizzed and burned with hot irons according to the custom of the day. These silken splendours and hair-crimpings were only displayed on Sundays, holidays and birthdays; on ordinary occasions Manon wore a plain linen frock, in which she frequently accompanied her mother to market, or was even sent across the way to buy a little salad or parsley. And the future heroine of the Gironde would infuse so much courtesy and dignity into her manner of making these purchases, that the astonished fruiterer always served her before his other customers. She was also at times called into the kitchen, where her mother taught her to make omelettes and other dishes, an acquirement which proved useful afterwards, when her husband's delicate digestion frequently induced her to prepare with her own hands the food he took.

Madame Phlipon, who was pious without being a



bigot, had unobtrusively instilled her religious principles into her daughter's mind. Although Manon's infant reason had been troubled by the idea that God should have permitted the transformation of the Devil into a serpent, her feelings were gradually touched by the moral beauty of Christianity; and after her first confirmation, the teachings of the New Testament took deep and deeper hold of her. She now began to meditate on the mysteries of faith and eternal salvation, and felt that she was but ill-prepared for her first communion. Thereupon she became convinced that she ought to enter a convent, where her devotion would be entirely untrammelled; and while daily studying the folio *Lives of the Saints*, she deplored those happy days of martyrdom when persecuted Christians triumphantly proclaimed their creed in the very fangs of death. Alas! the child's wish was granted to the woman: to her was indeed given the martyr's death and the martyr's crown. Nor did she, in the fulness of time, falter in her new faith beneath the knife of the guillotine.

In this solemn state of mind she at last, one evening, took courage to proffer her request to her parents. "I fell at their feet," she says, "shedding at the same time a torrent of tears which almost deprived me of speech. Troubled and surprised, they asked me the reason of my strange excitement. 'I am going to beg of you,' I said, sobbing, 'to do something which grieves me sorely but which conscience demands. Send me to a nunnery.' They raised me from the ground. My good mother was much moved. While it was pointed out to me that I had never been refused any reasonable request, they asked me what had put me into this frame of mind. I replied that I wished

to prepare for my first communion in the deepest possible seclusion." As her parents expressed themselves ready to comply with her desire, she was presently placed in the Sisterhood of the Congregation, in the Rue Neuve St. Étienne, Faubourg St. Marceau. This happened on the 7th of May 1765, when she was eleven years old. By a curious coincidence, the convent where she then passed one of the happiest years of childhood was touching the prison where she came to be confined in her prime.

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## CHAPTER II.

SOPHIE.

SHUT in by high walls, the hushed green convent garden lay, amid the stir and noise of ever restless Paris, like a little oasis of peace and prayer and ecstatic absorption in God. Here, noiselessly moving along ancient avenues, now touched with the living green of spring, walked the sober nuns, standing out in mournful relief against the flowering glory of May. The impression of this secluded spot, of the regulated contemplative life, of the religious services, where the full organ tones mingled with the soaring voices of the nuns as they chanted their anthems, filled the young devotee with rapture. In spite of her intense affection for her mother, Manon dreamed of taking the veil, though well aware that as an only child she would meet with the strongest opposition from her parents. In the meanwhile she assiduously applied herself to devotional exercises, and became a favourite with the nuns. They soon felt how such a pupil would redound to their credit and lavished praises and caresses on her. Within a few months of her entrance, by the unanimous consent of the superiors and the director, she was allowed to receive her first communion.

This year, spent by Manon at the convent, was

marked by the beginning of an intimacy which never knew break or interruption for thirteen years; and to the correspondence which it elicited we owe the knowledge of Madame Roland's daily thoughts, habits and surroundings while she still lived in the peaceful obscurity of private life.

In the summer months of 1765 some new boarders, young ladies from Amiens, were expected at the convent. Great excitement in consequence among the pupils pending their arrival! At last the strangers made their appearance, and happened at supper to be seated at the same table with Manon Phlipon. They were Henriette and Sophie Cannel. The eldest was a well-grown girl of eighteen, whose countenance indicated a mixture of sensitiveness, pride, and discontent. The fact being, that, as she was of a very joyous and lively disposition, she did not relish being sent back to convent life in order to mitigate her sister's grief at leaving home. Sophie seemed of a much more equable temper, though her charming countenance was just then stained with tears. She was a gentle, demure, affectionate young damsel of fourteen, with a prematurely reflective turn of mind. Manon was taken at first sight by her young neighbour, though she could see her but indistinctly, her face being covered by a veil of white gauze. They soon became inseparable. They worked, read, walked together, and, being both in a deeply religious frame of mind, enjoyed the closest community of sentiment. In the fresh delight of uttering their thoughts for the first time, they often sauntered arm-in-arm down the fragrant avenues of old lime-trees, and the year which they thus passed together remained one of the most pleasant memories of their lives.

There was another inmate of the convent who contracted a genuine and lifelong attachment for Manon. This was Angélique Boufflers, who, being dowerless, had perforce taken vows at seventeen. She was one of the lay sisters, under the name of Sister Agathe. Although the most menial tasks devolved on her, she performed them all with zeal and cheerfulness, while in mind and heart she was far superior to most of the ladies of the choir. With quick penetration she singled out the little Phlipon as her pet boarder, and never lost an opportunity of anticipating her wishes, even secretly giving her a key to her cell, that in her absence she might pore over the poems and writings of the Mystics—to the shrill singing of her canary bird. This good soul, whose repressed affection seems to have been concentrated on the extraordinary child that for a while gladdened her monotonous existence, never quite lost sight of Madame Roland. And years later, when convents were abolished, poor Sister Agathe, living penuriously in a garret near her ancient haunts, forgot the vicissitudes of her own lot in lamenting those of her “daughter,” as she was wont to call her darling Manon.

But these days lay unsuspected in the future. We are as yet only in the summer of 1766, when Manon, having passed her appointed time at the convent, was taken to spend a year with her paternal grandmother. Her father, having been appointed to some parochial office, was taken much from home, and the supervision of the apprentices devolved to a great extent on her mother, who might thus not have been able to devote herself so much to her daughter as she would have wished. So it was judged better to place her under her grandmother’s care. Old Madame Phlipon, who

lived with a maiden sister in a decent apartment in the quiet Ile Saint Louis, was a portly, good-humoured little woman, whose winning laugh, agreeable manners and roguish twinkle, showed her at sixty-six not indifferent to her appearance. Left a widow after one year's marriage, she seems to have lived in the character of help and governess in the family of some rich and distant relatives, but was now taking her ease on a little legacy, reverentially waited on by her maiden sister, Angélique, with pale face, poked-out chin, and spectacles on nose. The jovial Madame Phlipon was very fond of young people, and initiated her grandchild in the mysteries of fine needlework and sentimental conversation, not unenlivened by wit.

Manon Phlipon, now in her teens, returned once more to her parents and to her small closet, narrower than any nun's cell. "My father's house had not," she writes, "the solitary tranquillity of that of my grandmother; still, plenty of air and a wide space on the roof overlooking the Pont Neuf, were before my dreamy and romantic imagination. How many times from my window, which looked northward, have I contemplated with emotion the vast desert of heaven, from the blue dawn of morning behind the Pont du Change, until the golden sunset, when the glorious purple faded away behind the trees of the Champs Élysées and the houses of Chaillot. I rarely failed to employ thus some moments of a fine day; and quiet tears frequently stole deliciously from my eyes, whilst my heart, throbbing with an inexpressible sentiment, happy thus to beat, and grateful to exist, offered to the Being of beings a homage pure and worthy of Him."

Her father, seeing her remarkable aptitude for

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almost every pursuit, had not given up the idea of making her, to some extent, his assistant, and again induced her to handle the graving tool. He would set her to engrave the edge of a watch-case or to ornament a box, and, in order to give her an interest in this work, he induced her to keep an account book, and divided the profits of these little jobs between them. But the pleasure of purchasing a ribbon or girlish trinket did not compensate her for the time lost to serious study, and she presently put away the graver and never touched it again.

Her life in those days was of unvarying regularity. Every morning she and her mother went to mass, and then to do a little shopping. Lessons from some of the masters already mentioned filled up the rest of the forenoon. In the retirement of her closet she would afterwards study until evening, when her mother read some instructive book to her, she being engaged the while in needlework.

Outwardly, no existence could be more monotonous than was Manon Phlipon's at this time; but what a glow of feeling, what a moving panorama of ever fresh images, what an eager reaching out after self-improvement filled the inward life with a stir of passionate activity. To this power of mental concentration she owed a plenitude of sensations that even in youth is given to but few to feel; for she had a magnificent physique, and her highly-strung sensitive nerves it is to impair a vigour that would not have disgraced a hero. This accounts for her being able to did not sleep far into the night, and yet re-awakened with an Amazach of the joyous feeling of a bird. Every study till she died, was like the spring of the day to her. something of her intellectual life was poured forth in long morning, indeed.

This varied

letters to Sophie, now returned to Amiens. In those letters, often carried on from day to day, and sent once or twice a week, one almost seems to hear her thinking aloud. In them she hits off every occurrence of the day, giving an analysis of every book she had read, and discussing the religious meditations and philosophical ponderings that succeeded them. The published correspondence opens in the year 1771. The precocious habits of thought and fluency of style of this girl of seventeen are most surprising, especially when one bears her surroundings in mind. Of course we meet with the sententiousness of the eighteenth century, with its high-sounding phrases and idyllic sentimentality; but when we remember that the people who wrote so complacently about the abstract virtues were, in the fulness of time, ready to sacrifice everything to their convictions, we must acknowledge that what now sounds affected to us, once had the fulness of reality.

In one of the earliest letters, we meet with this striking passage: "The knowledge of ourselves is no doubt the most useful of the sciences. Everything tends to turn towards that object the desire to know which is born with us, a desire we try to satisfy by acquainting ourselves with the histories of all past nations. This is by no means a useless habit, if we know how to avail ourselves of it. My views on reading are already very different from those I entertained a few years ago; for I am less anxious to know facts than men; in the history of nations and empires, I look for the human heart, and I think that I discover it too. Man is the epitome of the universe; the revolutions in the world without are an image of those which take place in his own soul."



The girl thinker, lost in meditation in her little cell, while outside the din and roar of the mighty city were lulled for awhile, actually hit upon one of those truths which we are wont to consider as the mature fruit and last result of Goethe's philosophy of life. It is not knowledge or power or literary fame that this child of the Seine asks for (though they were all within reach of her); no, what she would learn is the art to live—that most difficult of all the arts, according to the author of *Faust*. For in 1772, we hear the humble enameller's daughter writing: "Let us endeavour to know ourselves; let us not be that factitious thing which can only exist by the help of others. Let us be ourselves. *Soyons nous.*" Here we have the note of the highest originality—of genius. Instead of a slavish following of custom, instead of trying to digest the old dough of superannuated ideas, which has spoilt the digestion of so many generations, let us dare to solve the problems of life in our own way and day; let us try and see for ourselves, not take it for granted that all our thinking has been done for us by our ancestors. If in these thoughts of the young student there is something of the lofty calm of the sage, there is likewise a tone of practical sagacity and daring, indicative of a nature eminently fitted for mixing in and controlling affairs.

How far Sophie Cannet herself may have been able to enter into her friend's abstract reasonings we have but little means of ascertaining; but from many allusions in these letters we infer that she was of a serious turn of mind, and fond of keeping pace with the studies of Manon, who in the course of a year or two outsped her, however, so completely, that she gave up the attempt. Sophie, moreover, was not free to

follow her studious bent. Placed in a provincial capital, and a higher social sphere, she was expected to go into society with its trivial round of visitings, balls, and whist parties. It is amusing to note how often Marie Phlipon compassionates her for this drudgery of pleasure, and how vehemently she inveighs against dancing, when a man's mind, she says, is in his legs, and a woman's head turned by insipid compliments. "Ah!" she exclaims, "you give me a very amusing description of those young ladies drawn up under arms in the prescribed uniform, that their judges may review them. A comic picture which may entertain, but I am shocked at that servitude forged by the chains of opinion, of which they make themselves the willing slaves. How foolish women are! They would exercise a genuine empire over men if their reason reinforced that of their charms, and if they would persist in retaining the right of disposing of their hearts in favour of merit sanctioned by duty."

But Manon could not entirely steel herself to the pleasing sensations of vanity. She was now in the early bloom of youth, a rich exuberant bloom in no wise dimmed by her midnight studies. She was tall and well proportioned, with a womanly fulness of contour. The ample development of her figure partook more of the robustness of the people than of the delicately-reared ladies, who pay for their delicacy with *vapeurs* in one age and neuralgia in another. Languor and weariness never came near her. In her erect carriage and light easy walk, the elasticity of her nature showed itself. She had soft, dark, abundant hair, eyes of almost transparent darkness, where the white is so pure as to appear almost blue, and a brilliant complexion, midway between fair and brunette, the quick

blood coming in flushes with every passing emotion. In spite of her philosophy, Manon sometimes critically surveyed her nose in the glass, and heaved an involuntary sigh at its tip being too clumsy. Her mouth also, like that of all born speakers, was large for the strict rules of beauty, but showed fair white teeth when she talked or smiled. The strength and energy of her character revealed itself in the bold turn of her prominent chin, while her richly modulated voice, changing with every variation of feeling, resembled one of those subtly-stringed instruments whose vibrations are capable of expressing all moods, from the faintest suggestions of tenderness to the most fervid accents of indignation or daring.

Such being her appearance, she could not walk abroad with impunity; certainly not in the streets of Paris, where, from the *ouvrier* in his blouse to the *fidneur* on the Boulevards, every man looks upon a handsome woman as fair game for his flattering comments. Of course, in French fashion, Manon never went out unaccompanied. But when on a Sunday her father took her to the Tuileries gardens, or to the picture galleries, which he delighted to frequent with her, there would often come about her the buzz of admiring remarks not altogether unpleasant in her ears.

But these very harmless diversions were not without their after-effects. They left behind them a certain elation of vanity and an increased desire to please. On the other hand, these mundane thoughts but ill accorded with her philosophical tenets and religious principles. These and other promptings of an "unregenerate" heart began to trouble her considerably; shocked at certain unaccountable stirrings in her nature, she used to leap out of bed in the middle of

winter, stand with naked feet on the tiled floor of her bed-room, and, by way of penance, sprinkle her head with ashes—a frame of mind probably induced by her reading “The Lives of the Saints.” In going to confession at this time, she once accused herself of “having had emotions contrary to the chastity of a Christian”; but the Abbé Morel not finding very much to say, she concluded that she was not so criminal as she had supposed. This phase of mind belonged to her fifteenth year, for in the course of a few years she began to inquire more deeply into her religious principles; and the first shock her belief sustained had its origin in her revolting from the idea of a “Creator, who devotes to eternal torments those innumerable beings, the frail works of his hands, cast on the earth in the midst of so many perils, and lost in a night of ignorance, from which they have already had so much to suffer.” In the warmth of her heart she would have re-echoed Diderot’s resounding cry—“Enlarge your God.” With fearless truthfulness, Manon’s first impulse on becoming conscious of her nascent doubts was to confide them to her confessor, a little man not wanting in sense and of unimpeachable conduct. Anxious to re-establish her shaken faith, he lent her a number of works by the champions of Christianity. The curious part of this transaction was that, on learning the names of the authors attacked in these controversial writings, she took care to procure them also, and thus came to read Diderot, D’Alembert, Raynal’s *Système de la Nature*, passing in course of time through many intellectual stages, in which she was in turn Jansenist, Stoic, Sceptic, Atheist, and Deist. She finally landed in a frame of mind much resembling that of the modern Agnostic; content to admit that there is an Unknow-

able, and that there "are many things in heaven and earth" insoluble by the best patented philosophies, whether material or otherwise. For the rest, she says that at one time, while intent on the study of Descartes and Malebranche, she used curiously to watch her kitten, considering it as a piece of mechanism going through its evolutions. But it seemed to her that in separating feeling from its manifestations she was dissecting the world and robbing it of all its charms; and she would sooner have adopted Spinoza's view, and ascribed a soul to everything rather than go without the belief in one. But on the whole, whenever her feelings were deeply moved she willingly recurred to the belief in a beneficent Creator and the immortality of the soul. While these thoughts were agitating her inwardly, she was fearful of communicating them to Sophie, for fear of exposing her to like mental disturbances. But what was her surprise on learning from her friend's letter that, without any prompting from without, she had been passing through a similar crisis! In her delight at this news, she writes in May 1772:—"By what strange coincidence of mutual similarity do you always trace my story in writing your own? Or rather, why does the openness with which you show me your heart reproach me for having hidden from you what was passing in mine? Without wishing to excuse my silence, you shall know its reason."

Superfluous to enter into her explanation. She confesses that a high self-esteem is her besetting sin, ingenuously exclaiming, "I am evidently so conceited that this same self-esteem hinders me from seeing the many faults which must of course be mine." But in reality she was not so far wrong, and had hit her one cardinal failing:

for her physical, moral, and intellectual attributes were so finely balanced as to make her an exceptionally complete human being; nor was she so much mistaken in her estimate of Sophie. Her instinctive hesitation in disturbing her friend's convictions shows a fine insight into character; for this young lady, cut adrift from her old moorings, tossed violently from opinion to opinion, and after much mental perturbation, lapsed again into Catholicism. Manon's epistolary tone during these mental distresses is gentle, as towards a sick child. With much philosophy, she is equally ready to utter her thoughts as frankly as heretofore, or to hold her tongue, whichever may best suit her friend's mood. But outspoken sincerity or tolerant silence were alike intolerable to Sophie. Nothing would content her but that her friend should retrace her steps and re-enter the fold. This being impossible, the old effusiveness at times suffered some constraint, which, however, disappeared when the Cannets paid an occasional visit to Paris.

Manon's natural bias became gradually more manifest, and preoccupations with man's social well-being engaged her in preference to theological and metaphysical subjects. During her mother's lifetime she must also have observed a certain reserve as regards some topics, for she dreaded nothing more than hurting her feelings. Deeply as she loved her mother, a subtle reticence had sprung up between them, especially since Manon had emerged from childhood. Madame Phlipon's deep but undemonstrative feelings did not call forth that full flow of confidence which the daughter, with some encouragement, would have been prepared to indulge in. In order to know what was passing in Manon's mind, the copious epistles to Sophie were usually left unsealed on the table for a while; and,

without any explicit understanding, Madame Phlipon could make herself acquainted with their contents. Outwardly Manon not only conformed to her mother's religious practices during the latter's life-time ; but she held that a woman was bound to do so, whatever her opinions, for the sake of those "weaker brethren," whose conduct would be modelled on her own. So that after her mother's death she still continued attending divine service for the sake of their trusty old domestic, Mignonne, whose highest wish was to die in the service of her young mistress.

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## CHAPTER III.

## TWO QUEENS.

THE announcement of Louis XV.'s mortal illness found an echo even in the secluded life of the humble engraver's family. Writing to her friend at Amiens on the 9th May 1774, Manon remarks: "Although the obscurity of my birth, name and position seem to preclude me from taking any interest in the Government, yet I feel that the common weal touches me in spite of it. My country is something to me, and the love I bear it is most unquestionable. How could it be otherwise, since nothing in the world is indifferent to me. I am something of a cosmopolitan, and a love of humanity unites me to everything that breathes. A Caribbean interests me; the fate of a Kaffir goes to my heart. Alexander wished for more worlds to conquer; I could wish for others to love." Magnificent humanitarian cry to have burst from the lips of this lovely recluse of twenty!

And while a young girl on the Quai de l'Horloge felt the deep stirrings of a woman's heart for a people whose suffering condition she had not apprehended as yet, another girl—also in her first bewitching bloom—ascended the throne of France, and was hailed by



Burke as "just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy."

It is curious to remember that these two women, born in such opposite ranks—the one on a throne, the other in a workshop—destined one day to play such opposite parts in the approaching political tragedy, both destined to perish amid the clash of warring social forces—were for a short time at this, the spring-time of their lives, lodged in the same palace, where Marie Antoinette reigned in the lustre of royalty, while Marie Jeanne looked on critically from the back-stairs. It gives one some food for reflection to compare these two natures, and to observe that the daughter of a long line of sovereigns was a mere giddy, frivolous, thoughtless school-girl, while the daughter of the enameller had matured her mind by long hours of study and meditation, and, even at this early age, showed an irrepressible interest in public affairs, whenever they came within her ken. If faculty demand function, surely one of these two girls was by nature anointed Queen of France—and that one was not Marie Antoinette. But from the round men stuck into three-cornered holes, and three-cornered men jammed into round holes, springs half the mischief of the world. Marie Jeanne might have made an incomparable ruler; Marie Antoinette's cravings for pleasure might have remained the harmless vagaries of a beautiful woman. But these vagaries, in the position to which circumstances had condemned her, assumed the proportions of a crime. So far from any yearning of compassion for Kaffirs or Caribbeans, what cared Marie Antoinette for the French people, who, ground

down by a system of infamous taxation, toiled and moiled in semi-starvation, that Court and nobles might enjoy the greater luxury? What cared she for the peasants who, sooner than cultivate the fruitful champagnes, chose to uproot their vines because of the exorbitant dues which made hard work as useless as idleness? She could care nothing for these things, since she knew nothing whatever of the condition of the people whose Queen she was.

Her peep at this royal show must have been not a little suggestive to Marie Phlipon, when taken by her mother to pass a week at Versailles, in the autumn of 1774. Accompanied by the Abbé Bimont and his housekeeper, they were lodged in the attics, one of the female-servants of the palace being a friend of theirs. The sumptuous repasts, receptions, plays, balls, card-parties, and what not, passing in succession before the eyes of Plutarch's disciple, shocked her sense of justice and hurt her pride. While she stood there among the crowd, she must often from a distance have seen the radiant young queen, brightly blazing amid her favourite attendants, and recognised Louis XVI.'s bluff, ungainly bearing amid the obsequious swarm of elegant courtiers. And as the dazzling pictures of court-life were passing before her, did she foresee that presently, as in a play, the scene would be shifted, and that this same brilliant court would quake to the tramp of an infuriated mob of women—menacing, haggard, dishevelled, half-starved—till, under the very walls of the Palace of Versailles, with its daintily-fed inmates, rang out the terrible cry for bread? And that, again, presently King and Queen, courtiers and all, would be swept in the revolutionary tornado from the very face of the earth? No, these things were as yet only darkly brewing in the future;

but Manon, disgusted with the Court, and impatiently awaiting the moment of departure, took more pleasure in looking at the statues in the gardens than at the personages in the palace. To her mother's inquiry if she were pleased with her visit, she answered, "Provided it is soon over; otherwise I shall detest these people so heartily that I shall not know what to do with my hatred." And to the question of what harm they had done, she replied, "To make me feel injustice and see absurdity." "A benevolent monarch," she wrote afterwards to Sophie, "appears to me almost adorable; but if, before my birth, I had been given the choice of a Government, I would have declared in favour of a Republic."

Once at home, Manon turned with renewed zest to her books. She became so interested in the study of geometry, that, being too poor to buy a certain treatise which had been lent her, she actually copied the whole of it. Presently a fresh disturbance from without was not without exercising a permanent influence on her mind. One day she was startled from her studies by the tramping of an excited crowd hurrying to the Place de la Grève (the place of execution), where two young parricides were condemned to suffer death by the wheel and the stake. People had crowded to the very roofs of houses to witness this appalling punishment. However much the girl shrank from the abominable sight, she could not shut out the shrieks of the wretches nor the smell of the burning faggots! Their cries were heard from her mother's bed, for one of the criminals lived for twelve hours on the wheel. All night this hideous occurrence racked her. However shocked at the crime, she was even more so at people who could find pleasure in such a sight. "In truth," she writes, "human

nature is not at all estimable considered *en masse*. I cannot conceive what can thus excite the curiosity of thousands to see two of their fellow-creatures die. The popularity of the gladiatorial fights in Rome no longer surprises me. A kind of ferocity, a certain taste for blood, must be latent in the human heart. But, no; that I cannot believe. I imagine that we all of us love strong impressions, because they give us a lively sense of existence, and the same taste which takes the educated people to the theatres carries the populace to the Place de la Grève. Yes, the pitiless mob applauded the tortures of the criminal as if at a play. Of course his crime was horrible; but at such instants, one forgets the criminal and his crime, only to feel the agony of a fellow-being, and suffering nature makes herself one with pain. I confess that I feel contempt for men, as well as love; they are so bad or so mad that it is impossible not to despise them. On the other hand, they are so wretched that it is just as impossible to help pitying and loving them. Ah!" she sighs, "I was not prepared for these strange and violent impressions which have come to trouble my ideas, and to modify my whole being in quite a new manner."

Heré, then, we have the first heart-throb of pity and yearning over the suffering multitudes, which was never to cease till her own heart ceased to beat. Descending from the serene heights of placid philosophical meditations, she looked at the world she lived in, and what she saw filled her soul with a shuddering awe. Louis Blanc is surely mistaken when he avers, in one passage of his *History of the French Revolution*, that Madame Roland, unlike Rousseau, had no feeling for the common people. On the

contrary, she felt the strongest love and commiseration for them. The reasons on which he bases this assertion are, her speaking rather contemptuously of shop-keepers and her aversion to taking a husband from that class in marriage. The reasons which she herself gives for her dislike show that it arose from a strong democratic feeling, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter. Certain it is that henceforth she begins to be more and more preoccupied with the social condition of men, for, in one of her letters to Sophie, she says that, in her eyes, the first and most beautiful of all the virtues is the care for the common weal, the love of the unfortunate, and the desire to help them.

And already there were many signs and portents of the coming events. Like that little cloud which, no bigger than a man's hand, in a seemingly windless sky, is seen weirdly flying across the heavens, and known by mariners to forebode the gathering of the hurricane, there were sudden outbreaks and bread-riots, from which those who can read signs augured the brewing tempest.

In 1775 Marie alludes to a popular agitation which breaks out, now in one spot and now in another, owing to the scarcity of provisions. In the May of that year, she wrote that, in spite of certain edicts of the Ministry with regard to importation of grain from abroad, high prices have ruled in the markets, and that the people, spurred on by want, have raised loud outcries, in some instances forcing the shop-keepers to sell their provisions at a lower price, or else plundering their premises. Crowd after crowd assembled before the bakers' shops, and the wisest closed their shutters and threw the loaves out of window. She draws a most moving

picture of these famished wretches, cadaverous with hunger, beating a devil's tattoo on the shutters, jostling and pressing each other in their need, and with greedy eyes watching the loaves, as they stumble over each other in their hot haste to catch them! This disturbance was at last allayed by a reduction of the price of bread to a loaf of two sous, and Manon dilates on the singular appearance of the crowd, now appeased, if only for the present. "Some of the people," she writes, "caper about with loaves hugged in their arms, carrying them in triumph, and manifesting the pleasure of satisfied hunger by the most energetic gestures. In many quarters," she continues, "the disturbance would hardly have been perceived had it not been for the pusillanimity of the shopkeepers, who all closed their shutters." She herself • was a witness of one of these panics. On entering a church to hear mass, three or four children came running in to seek shelter from a mob that was making for a neighbouring baker. Great alarm on the part of the beadles and the female chair-hirers, who, violently shutting the doors, would naturally have led the otherwise unsuspecting congregation to think that enraged ravishers were coming to violate the most sacred of shrines. "The poor people only wanted bread, and thought not of altars," she says, adding significantly, "the sight of these things gives one quite a new kind of feeling and awakens a host of thoughts."

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## CHAPTER IV.

## MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

MANON'S life was not always darkened by images of fearful punishments and famished crowds, nor did she perpetually pore over the Greek classics and modern encyclopædists. She sometimes went to Christmas and birthday gatherings given by one or other of her many relatives, and would draw a half-ironical picture of herself to her friend as gliding along a room in floating pink draperies trimmed with roses. But her gravity did not resist the infection of pleasure when at a ball, and she seems to have footed it on "the light fantastic toe" with the merriest madcap of them all. At other times, although but rarely, she and her mother would attend what we should now call "Musical At-Homes." At the house of a certain Madame Lépine, Manon got a glimpse of some of the lesser *littérateurs* of Paris, who, she says, used to meet in a dingy room, up three flights of stairs, and lit up by tallow candles in dirty brass candlesticks, would recite their verses or play their compositions. But this glimpse of literary society—third-rate it is true—had no attraction for Marie, who, although born and bred in Paris, always preferred a country to a town

life. To live on your own plot of ground, to grow your own fruits and vegetables, to taste the living sweetness of the air, seemed to her the most exquisite lot; and whenever there was any question as to where the family should go for their Sunday excursion, she pleaded for Meudon. One of the most charming passages in her *Memoirs* is the description of such a trip:—

We went often to Meudon, it was my favourite walk; I preferred its wild woods, its solitary ponds, its avenues of pines, its towering trees, to the crowded paths and monotonous groves of the Bois de Boulogne, to the ornamental gardens of Bellevue, or the clipped alleys of St. Cloud. "Where shall we go to-morrow?" quoth my father, on the Saturday evenings during summer-time; "the fountains are to play; there will be a world of company." "Oh, papa! If you would only go to Meudon, I should like it so much better." At five o'clock on a Sunday morning, everybody was astir. A fresh simple muslin frock, a few flowers and a gauze veil, showed the plans of the day. The *Odes of Rousseau*, a play by Corneille, or some other author, formed my only baggage. Then the three of us set off and embarked at the Pont Royal (which I could see from my window) on board a little boat, which carried us with delightful rapidity to the shores of Bellevue, not far from the glassworks, the dense black smoke of which is seen from a great distance. Thence by a steep ascent we proceeded to the avenue of Meudon, about the middle of which we had noticed a little house on the right, which became one of our halting places. . . .

One day, after having rambled about for a long time in an unfrequented part of the wood, we reached an open and solitary spot, at the end of an avenue of tall trees, where promenaders were but rarely seen; a few more trees, scattered on a charming lawn, seemed to screen a prettily-built cottage, two stories high.—Ah! What have we here? Two pretty children were playing before the door. They had neither a town-bred air, nor those signs of misery so common to the country; on drawing nearer we noticed a kitchen-garden, where an old man was at work. To walk in and enter into conversation with him was the affair of an instant. We learned that the place was called *Ville Bonne*; that its inhabitant was the water-bailiff of the *Moulin-Rouge*, whose office it was to see that the canals conveying water to the different parts of the park were kept in repair; that the slender salary of this place helped to support a young couple, the parents of



the children we had seen, and of whom the old man was the grandfather; that the wife was engaged in the cares of the household, while the old man cultivated the garden, the produce of which his son, in leisure moments, went to sell in town. This garden was a long square, divided into four parts, round each of which was a good-sized walk; a pond in the centre facilitated irrigation; and at the further end an arbour of yews, with a large stone seat, afforded rest and shelter. Flowers, intermixed with vegetables, gave the garden a gay and agreeable appearance; while the robust and contented gardener reminded me of the old man on the banks of the *Galests*, whom Virgil has sung. We inquired whether they were not in the habit of receiving strangers. "Few come this way," replied the old man; "the place is little known; but if by chance any come, we never refuse such fare as our farm-yard and kitchen-garden afford." We begged something for dinner, and were presently served with new-laid eggs, vegetables, and salads, in a delicious arbour of honeysuckle behind the house. I never made so agreeable a meal; my heart expanded in the innocent enjoyment of this charming situation. I fondled the little children and showed my veneration for the old man. The young woman seemed pleased to have given us accommodation; there was some talk of two rooms which might be let to persons desirous of taking them for three months; and we had an idea of doing so. This delightful intention was never destined to be realised; nor have I ever again revisited Ville Bonne.

About this time Madame Phlipon's health began gradually to decline. She grew more serious and taciturn, and stirred less from home than formerly. Grief and anxiety may also have helped the ravages of disease. For her husband had insensibly begun to neglect his business, to go frequently abroad and to have fits of irritability and ill-temper, which his wife bore with invariable patience and good-humour. If they happened to differ on any subject, although she was his superior in every respect, she gave up her own opinion with the greatest willingness for the sake of domestic peace. So that her daughter never suspected till she was grown up that her mother's life might not possibly be as smooth as it appeared on the surface. When she was older, she often noticed her

father's weak points in these conjugal arguments, and, availing herself of the ascendancy she at this time had over him, always took her mother's part, and, not inaptly, called herself her watch-dog.

Madame Phlipon, no doubt, felt that her strength was failing, and her experience must have warned her of some of the trials that were in store for her daughter when she should be no more. Her eyes used to follow the girl about everywhere with a wistful tenderness, and she seemed, as it were, to envelop her with the brooding intensity of maternal love—a love that yearned to see her child sheltered in some home of her own before death snatched from her a mother's care. Without exactly daring to utter all she thought and feared, she would often urge Manon to accept one of the many suitors who sought her in marriage. At first she did not particularly press the matter, but when Manon was twenty-one she entreated her earnestly to accept a certain respectable jeweller who had proposed to her. She represented to her daughter that here was a man in a comfortable position, honest, upright, and of good reputation, who had the highest regard for her, and was quite willing to follow her lead. The following dialogue, given in the *Memoirs* brings the situation vividly before one. Quoth Manon:—

"But, Mamma, I don't want a husband whom I am to guide: he would be too big a child for me."

"Do you know that you are a very whimsical girl, for you would certainly not like a master?"

"Let us understand each other, dear Mamma; I should not like a husband to order me about, he would only teach me to resist him; but neither do I wish to rule my husband. Either I am much mistaken, or those creatures six feet high, with beards on their chins, seldom fail to make us feel they are the stronger; now, if the good man should suddenly bethink himself to remind me of his strength,

he would provoke me, and if he submitted to me I should be ashamed of my own power."

"I see; you would like a man to think himself the master while obeying you in everything."

Thus the pair argued without any decisive result, till Madame Phlipon hinting at the possibility of being taken from her daughter, pointed out that, more than twenty, as she was, suitors would no longer be as plentiful as during the last five years, and begged her, therefore, not to reject a man who, if he were not her equal in intellect and taste, would, at least, love her, and with whom she might be happy. "Yes, mamma," cried she, with a deep sigh, "happy as you have been!" Her mother was disconcerted, and made no reply; nor from that moment did she open her lips again on that or any other match, at least in a pressing manner. The exclamation had escaped the daughter without premeditation; its effect convinced her she had touched a sore spot.

In the spring of 1775, Madame Phlipon's health had grown so much worse that they resolved on trying a short stay at Meudon during the Whitsun holidays, and by it she was much benefited. Returned to Paris, her daughter left her for a few hours, fairly well as it seemed, to pay a visit to Sister Agathe; but no sooner had she reached the convent, than an unaccountable anxiety hurried her home again.

Madame Roland says that these presentiments of a coming trouble were never by her laid to the account of superstition, but that, loving her mother above everything on earth, she had, without knowing it, noticed certain slight changes in manner and appearance, which served vaguely to disturb her. On this particular occasion she felt such a sinking of the heart,

that she impatiently hurried home, to find the street-door standing wide open, while a young neighbour exclaimed on seeing her, "Oh! Miss, your Mamma is very ill; she has sent for my mother, who is up in the bed-room with her." To utter an inarticulate cry, fly up the stairs, hurry into the room, and find her mother lying back in her easy chair, with arms helplessly hanging over it, wildly-rolling eyes, mouth wide open, was the affair of an instant. At the sight of Manon some animation returned to her face; she made ineffectual efforts to speak, tried to lift her arms, and with a supreme effort of will raised her hand, and, gently stroking the girl's cheeks, as if to calm her, wiped the streaming tears from her face. With that last upflickering of love, her limbs grew rigid; she would fain have smiled, have spoken some parting words of consolation, but it was in vain.

Her daughter seemed to multiply herself to assist in saving her dying mother. She sent for the doctor, for her father, she flew to the apothecary and back, she administered an emetic, she helped her mother to bed, but nothing availed. Her eyes closed, her head fell forward on her breast, her breathing became increasingly painful, and at ten o'clock in the evening, as in a dream, Manon heard the doctor and her father sending for a priest to administer extreme unction. Standing at the foot of the bed, mechanically holding a candle in her hand while the priest was praying, with eyes fixed on her mother, she never stirred, till suddenly the light dropped from her grasp, and she fell senseless on the floor. When she came back to consciousness her mother was no more. The sighs and tears of those around, her father's livid face, the whispers and muffled inquiries, the efforts of the bystanders to

withhold her entrance into the room, whence she had been carried, served but too clearly to tell the tale. Presently she managed to escape unperceived, and, rushing back to her mother, flung herself on the bed in a transport of grief, and pressing her mouth to the cold, livid lips, tried to inhale death and perish with her.

With that mother ended the careless, sweet, happy, springtime of Manon's life. It was she who had shielded her from all rough contact with the world, down to those trivial interruptions of domestic life which eat out the heart of time; it was she who had created around her an atmosphere of exquisite peace and purity, interposing as a shield between her and the tainted manners of the time; and now that the young tree had grown tall and lusty, the fencing shelter was removed, and adverse winds were presently to try what it was made of.

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## CHAPTER V.

## MANON'S SUITORS.

AFTER her mother's death, Manon passed a fortnight in a very precarious state between convulsive fits and hours of mute prostration, unrelieved by tears. To divert her thoughts from constantly brooding on her loss, an Abbé, who sometimes came to see her, bethought him of lending her the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. This book was an era in Madame Roland's life. If Plutarch had inspired her with a love of republican institutions, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* showed her the ideal of domestic life, and she now eagerly read and re-read Rousseau's works: he became her breviary. Like other devout worshippers of this oracle of the eighteenth century, she burned to tender her homage to The Master, as Boswell and as Gibbon and hundreds of others had done, amongst whom the redoubtable Robespierre is said to have been one. Chance seemed to favour Manon's wishes, for amongst her acquaintances there happened to be a Swiss gentleman, to whom, as was her habit with friends, she had given a nickname, labelling him the "Philosophical Republican." This abstraction of a man—human enough, however, to be presently much in love with the fair Manon—was sufficiently obliging to make over to her a com-

mission he had been entrusted with, that of proposing to the impecunious Rousseau the composition of some musical airs. Marie Phlipon, delighted at this opportunity of seeing Rousseau, immediately indited an eloquent epistle, setting forth its object, adding that she would do herself the honour of fetching the answer in person at the stated time. Behold her then sallying forth in company with the faithful Mignonne, in a flutter of trepidation, hurrying through the streets of Paris, and arriving at last in the Rue Platrière, where Rousseau then lived. With the reverence with which one enters a temple, she knocked at the humble door, and thus she afterwards described her sensations to Sophie :—

It was opened by a woman of at least fifty, in a round cap, a clean and simple morning gown and a large apron. She looked severe and even a little hard.

"Madame, may I ask, does not M. Rousseau live here?"

"Certainly, Mademoiselle."

"Could I see him?"

"What is it you want of him?"

"I came for an answer to a letter which I wrote him a few days ago."

"Mademoiselle, he admits no one; but you can tell the people who have dictated your letter—for, of course, you never wrote such a letter as that——"

"Excuse me," I interrupted.

"The handwriting alone shows it to be by a man."

"Would you like to see me write?" I asked, laughing.

She shook her head, adding: "All that I am empowered to tell you is that my husband has absolutely given up doing things of that sort; he would wish nothing better than to be of service, but he is of an age to take some rest."

"I know it, but I would have felt flattered to have had my answer from his own lips; and I will, at least, seize this occasion to express my veneration for the man whom I esteem the most in all the world. Pray accept it, Madame."

She thanked me by keeping her hand on the lock as I went downstairs,

And so while everywhere young hearts were yearning to do him homage, Rousseau himself, shrinking from contact with his kind, was gnawed, cankered by that worst disease of the mind, the dreadful horror of imagining an enemy in everyone who sought to approach him. Perhaps, while outside the ardent girl waited eagerly to tell the author of the *Nouvelle Heloïse* what an unpayable debt she owed him, the man, whose burning thoughts were now alive within her, hid himself like some dumb wounded animal. He did not know, alas ! that at his door, vainly knocking for admittance, stood his very own daughter (for we are not only born in the flesh but in the spirit), that there, young and strong, beautiful and impassioned with thought, there waited one ready to render back to him in his old age the spiritual glow he had once emitted—he did not know—and, with only a wall between, they crossed each other unseen, never to meet on earth. But while the poor, time-battered body of the man was dragging out the few last years of abject wretchedness, his spirit had gone forth from him, swaying thousands of minds, as the vivifying west wind stirs the boughs of a vernal forest. Like Jubal—the inventor of the lyre—in George Eliot's fine conception, who dies broken-hearted by the wayside while the people pass on triumphantly chaunting his praises, Rousseau, too, was miserably perishing, even while his thought was becoming a living force which

Set the world in flame

• Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more.

In 1776 and also in 1777, the year preceding that of both Voltaire's and Rousseau's death, Madame Roland was intently studying the latter's works, and continually



alluding to him in her correspondence, especially to the *Discours* and the *Contrat Social*, "A book to be studied, not read," she remarked, "because, although very clearly written, it is too full of matter for the connection of the whole to be seized without effort."

The whole of Rousseau's works were given her by the "Republican Philosopher," who had fallen in love with her. In touching on this Chapter of Suitors, we must retrace our steps and begin with those who had appeared on the scene before the mother's death. For Manon did not belong to that class of shabbily treated young women who can at most boast of but one or two strings to their bow, being in that, as in some other respects, so favoured by nature as to be beset by a legion of wooers. These importunate creatures became the plague of her life, and she at last dreaded the addresses of a new aspirant as much as some young ladies rejoice in receiving them. It is curious enough to mark how these pretenders to Mademoiselle Phlipon's hand rise in the social scale in proportion as her personality gradually triumphs over her surroundings. The reader may remember that Spanish Colossus who taught her the guitar, and who in turn conceived the wild idea of asking this girl of fourteen or fifteen in marriage of her father. In his footsteps followed another of her teachers, the wizened little dancing-master, who, for the second time a widower, had had his huge wen operated upon before proceeding to the more delicate operation of proposing for her in marriage.

M. Phlipon, who prided himself not a little on his personal appearance, enjoyed the joke heartily, and without precisely telling his daughter of these curious wooers, threw out so many sly hints, that she could

not help knowing all about it. As has been said, Manon used to go shopping with her mother, or occasionally with the maid, and in her dealings with a neighbouring butcher was always particularly well served. To her surprise, this identical butcher, whom she used to see on week-days cutting up joints, was always meeting them on their Sunday walks in a handsome suit of black and lace ruffles. Moreover, when she fell ill once, he sent round every morning to inquire after her health, enforcing the message with the choicest tit-bits of his shop. Thereat her father smiled, joked, rubbed his hands, and one day gravely introduced her to a certain Mademoiselle Michon, who had come ceremoniously in the butcher's name (a rich widower) to ask her hand. Her father having maliciously let her in for this interview, she found means to evade giving an offensive refusal, by saying that she was so fond of her present way of life, as to be resolved not to change her state for years to come. This reply did not precisely suit the views of her father, who exclaimed, "Why, here is an answer, forsooth, to frighten away all future lovers!"

Presently, however, there came an offer from a man her parents deemed not at all unsuited to her. This was in 1771, when she was seventeen, and it is curious to note how, before she had really thought much about marriage, she mechanically viewed it after the conventional French fashion. This man—a jeweller, who had already lost two wives, and who had a good business, an excellent reputation and an amiable disposition, seems chiefly to have desired the connection because Manon's unusually serious turn of mind led him to think she would make a capital housewife and accountant. She herself seemed quite without illusions! In

writing to Sophie, she reveals her inmost thoughts, and one can see that at this youthful age she felt almost as much bound to abide by her parents' choice as did Portia by the fateful caskets. Begging her friend's assistance on this "terrible occasion," she says she has had one interview with the gentleman, without being able to recall precisely "whether he was dark or fair," though it seems to her that "he was of a sallow complexion, with a long thin face, much pitted with the small-pox; hesitating of speech, and with nothing in his manners to attract or repel."

This affair, to her infinite relief, came to nothing; but one suit had no sooner been refused than a fresh wooer straightway started up, chiefly recruited from the tradesmen of "the quarter." These were by no means love suits, in our English sense, but business-like proposals, made by the relatives of would-be husbands to the lady's relatives, who first of all went to work in a round-about way, inquiring into the respective fortunes, character, disposition of the pair. To be so persistently sought after for years, not only shows that Marie Phlipon must have been considered the beauty of her quarter, but that her character and manners inspired the highest regard; not to forget that, being an only child, she was supposed to be an heiress in her small way.

Another batch of suitors having been sent about their business, Gatien Phlipon began to show signs of restiveness. He could sympathise with his daughter's aversion to ally herself with a pastrycook; but when it came to her refusing a thriving woollen-draper or goldsmith, he lost all patience. He began to rate her soundly for her dislike to shopkeepers, and Louis Blanc, as we have before hinted, seems inclined to

accuse her of wanting in love for the people because she scouted the proposed matches. But what are the reasons she gave her father for this dislike? Why, antipathy for those very *bourgeois* failings of which this eminent historian accuses her. She will not marry a rich tradesman because, forsooth, she has observed that the only way of making money in trade is by selling dear what has been bought cheap, "by overcharging customers and beating down the poor workman. I should never be able to descend to such practices," she told Philipon, "nor to respect a man who made them his daily occupations."

The next suitor that presented himself belonged to a different class; he was a promising young doctor from Provence, ambitious of rising in his profession, and looking out for a wife with some fortune. The preliminaries of this match had literally been all settled before Manon knew a word of the matter. As it is not customary in France for young men to visit at a house where there are young ladies, the girl was one day taken by her parents, as if casually—a shower of rain being the ostensible excuse—to the house of a certain lady, a distant relative, where they were hospitably entertained. In the meanwhile, Dr. Gardanne also dropped in, as if by accident. "The first impression was not enchanting," Manon wrote to her friend. "A man, above middle height, in wig and doctor's gown, dark, coarse-featured, with small eyes, glittering under bushy black eye-brows, and an imperious air. However, he grew animated in conversation, did ample justice to the sweetmeats," which he cracked in talking, and, with a gallantry smacking of the school, said to the young lady that he was very fond of sweets, to which the latter, not without a smile and a blush,

replied timidly, "that men were accused of loving sweet things, because in dealing with them one required great sweetness." The cunning doctor appeared enchanted with the epigram. Her father would willingly have given them his benediction on the spot; this politeness enraged his daughter.

Nothing was definitely settled on that occasion, but Madame Phlipon, tender and pensive,<sup>c</sup> began seriously expatiating on the advantages of this match; and Manon herself did not see any valid reason for refusal, save for the objection that, as she had had no opportunities of knowing, she could not well love this doctor. This was, of course, not taken into account, and, a formal offer being presently made, a second interview took place. Without being prepossessed in his favour, Manon told her friend that there was a good deal to be said in favour of this match.<sup>c</sup> Some of her incidental remarks afford curious glimpses into the manners of the time. "M. Gardanne," she says, "does not wish for one of those women who, in marrying, expect a lady's-maid, a second footman, a private sitting-room—one of those women, in short, who pass the night at parties and the day at cards, as is the custom with doctors' wives." These seem great expectations for the wife of a doctor of but eight years' practice. Dr. Gardanne having already a well-furnished house, it seemed as if the marriage must be concluded instantly, and mother and daughter went to pass a week in the country, during which the necessary formalities were to be arranged.

Manon's dowry was to be, on this occasion, eight hundred and eighty three pounds—worth treble the amount that it would be now. Meanwhile, M. Phlipon, busy, inquisitive, elated, lost no time in making all

possible inquiries concerning his future son-in-law, wrote off to the doctor's friends in Provence, made nice inquiries of the tradesmen he dealt with, and of his servants, and, having discovered that he had quarrelled with an influential person in his province, began lecturing him with the airs of the prospective father-in-law. The choleric doctor, having already heard of some of these proceedings, was so much ruffled in temper as to show his discontent to the relative who had first been instrumental in bringing the parties together. Whereupon this lady, no less fiery, considered her cousin slighted, and the affair was broken off. On the ladies' return from the country, nothing further was said of the suitor; Manon felt intensely relieved, the mother not sorry, and the father too crestfallen to say a word.

• In fact, he had now given up pressing Manon to get married, and, as time went on, was less anxious about the matter than his wife. He began enjoying the sense of his importance in having so admired a daughter. He now always showed her the various written demands for her hand that reached him, and his daughter would dictate the answer, couched in the most judicious terms, in the name of her papa.

In the meanwhile Madame Phlipon had died; Marie was keeping house for her father, when there called on her a young man, whom she had known some years ago, and who, on seeing her, asked, much moved, whether someone were ill. "Someone is dead," was her scarce audible reply. She then told what had happened, and read his sympathy in his silent emotion.

This young man was a certain Pahin de Lablancherie, who, two years later, in 1778, acquired some reputation

by starting, in concert with Brissot, a *General Correspondence on the Arts and Sciences*, or News of the Republic of Letters. This ambitious scheme, intended as an international association of scientific and literary men, looks like a germ of our British Associations and Social Science Congresses; and the man who planned them must have had some far-reaching ideas and good intentions, if nothing more. Certain it is that he was the first suitor of modern views who crossed Madame Roland's path, and the first who in any way touched her feelings.

He was also a man of literary proclivities, and, in 1776, published a work entitled, "Extracts from a Journal of my Travels; or, the History of a young Man: a Lesson to Fathers and Mothers." There is frequent mention of this book in Manon's correspondence, and an interesting review of it by her, written for her friend's behalf. She speaks of it with the impartiality of a critic, though admitting that she is afraid to mention it to others for fear they should suspect her interest in the author. It was a dull, moralising work, yet containing shocking descriptions of the licentiousness prevalent in the seminaries and colleges of the time, and it may have inspired Manon with some of that recoil from "the innate ferocity" of man which is a noticeable feature in her.

Lablancherie had proposed for Manon some years before; but, considering that he was only two-and-twenty, penniless, and studying for the Bar, with no definite prospects of advancement, the father considered such a marriage out of the question, and would not even hear of a correspondence, for which he had begged before returning to Orleans. That Manon regarded his suit with very different eyes from those

of her other wooers is very clear from her letters to her *confidante* Sophie. She could see nothing so wild in the young man's proposition to her father—to let them marry at once, live in his house for a few years, and, by means of her dowry, assist him to purchase a place in the magistracy, and so start them for life. She nevertheless acquiesced in M. Philipon's decision ; and now, after the lapse of a few years, behold ! Lablancherie made his appearance again, at a time when her mother's death had made a sad vacuity in her heart, and when the interesting pallor of her lover seemed to indicate that he had suffered much on her account.

There is no doubt that her feelings were touched at last, that she was in love, even if that love partook more of a fancy than a passion, was more of the head than the heart. If she had not been in love, would she have thought of saying that, though he was not a Rousseau, "his moral sentiments were beautiful and well expressed" ? If she had been more in love, would she have laid stress on his "infinite historical allusions and quotations from authors without end" ? At any rate, such as it was, it had some of the effects by which we can tell the highest kind of love, it kindled a very passion of perfection in her in order to make herself worthy of this exalted being, whom she had fashioned in the image of her ideal ; and whenever she did a generous action (and she did many), she naïvely laid it to the account of Lablancherie. She did not at this time contemplate marriage. It sufficed her that she was beloved of this "virtuous" young man, that they saw each other occasionally, that they could think of each other in absence. This state of affairs by no means suited the father's views. After his wife's



death he had considered it incumbent on himself to be always present when his daughter saw visitors ; but he very soon grew restive, ill-tempered, finally intimating to Lablancherie to discontinue his visits.

Here was a sad complication, a dire perplexity ! Filial obedience in conflict with pity for an unhappy man, dying apparently for love of her !—duty and affection pulling her heart in contrary directions ! While suffering less on her own account than on that of her lover, she is equally loth to speak and to keep silence, till at last, driven to desperation at the thought of what Lablancherie must endure, she bursts out to her friend, in January 1776, being then in her twenty-second year :—“ Sophie, Sophie, my friend ! I am passing through the most violent crisis ; I am in the most cruel conflict with myself. I have only strength enough left to throw myself into the arms of friendship. In another moment the letter I enclose would have been despatched to its address. Only by a great effort have I restrained myself. I wish to delude myself by sending it to you. My soul longs to unburden itself—I think it necessary for the life of him I love ; but then prejudice—custom—my father ! . . . O God ! how I suffer ! ”

The letter alluded to in the above lines is one which Manon, after much inward trepidation, had at last penned to her lover, in which she tells him that, bound by her father's wish, she is obliged to give up her intercourse with him, and that he must henceforth try and forget her.

The letter was sent by Sophie, and the result was that Lablancherie discontinued his visits entirely. Manon repeatedly expresses admiration for a lover who could thus respect her wishes and act up to

the highest principles; but whether she really liked it, those must decide who understand a woman's heart.

Months thus elapsed, and the lovers saw and heard nothing of each other. Preoccupied though Manon was, she used to enjoy walking out on a Sunday afternoon with her father, and on one such occasion she diverted herself in the Tuileries Gardens by inwardly criticising every person they passed, for she was, as she sometimes accused herself, something of a quiz. Amongst a group of ladies she caught sight of one, however, who struck her as so pretty and charming that she could find no fault with her. Suddenly she saw her father bowing to someone, and behold! by the side of this very pretty lady she caught sight of Lablancherie, who, while meeting her smile of surprise, from deep respect cast down his eyes. She was pleased at this unexpected meeting—or professed herself pleased. But a month afterwards, on walking in the Luxembourg with a lady friend, she again encountered him; and this time the grave, philosophic, love-sick Lablancherie was actually seen walking with an *ostrich feather in his hat!* (Then the height of fashion.)

"My poor heart," she writes to Sophie, "has been greatly perplexed and fatigued of late in consequence of a number of insignificant little events. Imagine that I have met D. L—b—e: that he wore a feather in his hat. Ah! you cannot imagine how this cursed little feather has tormented me. I have turned and twisted in every direction to reconcile so futile an ornament with that high philosophy, that rigid simplicity of taste, that noble way of thinking, which have endeared him to me. I can only see excuses, and am feeling cruelly what great significance little

things acquire when they make us suspect the nature of a beloved object." Was it really the little feather that was in fault, or was it a look, an air, a something that, like a flash, sometimes reveals unsuspected qualities in an intimately-known person. At any rate, it proved "the little rift within the lute." Manon learnt that day from her companion that Lablancherie had lately proposed to a rich, lovely young lady: was known to have done so in several other cases of heiresses, and, oh, horror! went by the name of "the lover of the eleven thousand virgins." How much to believe of this gossip the girl hardly knew; but it shattered the ideal she had formed of him. It had been so much more an ideal she had loved than a man, that she did not suffer very deeply. She had lost faith in Lablancherie, and with her faith all desire to marry him; but she declared that she would only marry the man who was what Lablancherie appeared to be.

The remarkable girl, however, was gradually attracting round her men of literary distinction and high social position, only too proud to come and chat with her. Among these was a Monsieur de Sainte Lette, a deputy from the Colony of Pondicherry to the French Court. This gentleman, who had travelled over all the world, and who had amassed a vast fund of knowledge and observation, came to the Phlipons with a letter of introduction from a certain Demontchery, a captain of sepoys in India, who, before leaving Paris, had also unsuccessfully proposed for the fair Manon. On returning to France after some years, he intended renewing his proposal, but learned that the lady had become Roland's wife within the fortnight. The society of Sainte Lette, a man of about sixty, but full of fire and intellect, a friend of Helvétius, and an enthusiastic humanitarian, was a

rare intellectual treat to Manon. In his vivacious, glowing manner, he satisfied her craving for knowledge by enlarging her ideas of society and government. Sometimes, about this time, Manon would preside over little dinners given to four or five friends, when the sociable, jovial M. Philpon, flattered at seeing such distinguished guests at his table, would only show himself from his most amiable side. The conversational powers of the future Madame Roland were now for the first time called into play.

Amongst several highly-cultivated men whose acquaintance she made through Sainte Lette, there was a M. de Sévelinges, a gentleman who had recently lost a beloved wife, and was plunged in grief when first Manon saw him. He was of an ancient family, of restricted means, and lived at Soissons, where he held some financial post, giving the rest of his time to the study of literature. Whereas Sainte Lette's nature seemed "compacted of fire and sulphur," his Pylades was of a gentle and melancholy temperament, and of the most refined sensibility. He, too, little by little, came under Manon's irresistible charm. After corresponding with her for a considerable time, there crept a something tender and insinuating into his letters; he seemed to find his solitude irksome, and to feel grieved at her position. He often dilated on the charms of a thoughtful companionship, finally writing a letter which, though somewhat ambiguously couched, had every appearance of a proposal of marriage. The idea of marrying M. de Sévelinges was not repugnant to Manon, and, though she was not the least in love with the gentleman, she may possibly have considered herself disillusioned in that respect, while in reality she was very heart-whole, as Sainte Lette had once

said to her, so heart-whole that she now formed a plan, which, however startling, reveals the simplicity and elevation of her nature. No sooner had she received Sévelinges' letter than she grasped the whole situation of affairs. Here was a highly-refined, cultivated man, tender-hearted, intellectual, learned, subtle, a man with whom she could have that community of ideas which was to her the *sine quâ non* of married life—a man who led a lonely, depressed, isolated existence, while she at home felt more and more in her father's way, between whom and herself the breach had been gradually widening. Trouble, discord, ruin, were threatening her domestic horizon, while the pleasing prospect of a peaceful home beckoned to her from Soissons. On the other hand, her high sense of justice warned her that M. de Sévelinges' means were extremely limited, his income not exceeding four hundred pounds per annum. His means, such as they were, partly proceeding from his first wife's fortune, seemed naturally to belong to his sons, two young men in the army, who would have just cause to complain, she considered, if, by the advent of a young family, they should be still further stinted in their expenses. Had she herself possessed a more ample dowry, her way would have been clear enough; but, under the circumstances, she could not reconcile such a marriage with her conscience. But an idea struck her, and to her faithful *confidante*, Sophie, she confesses that she thinks De Sévelinges must have been cherishing a similar notion—that of gaining a sister and companion, under a title which the custom of society rendered indispensable. This vision of passing her life by the side of a man to whom she would minister with an absolutely unselfish devotion quite

enchanted Manon's benevolent heart. In her protestations of being free from all passion, one cannot help feeling the vibrations of a nature that had never yet sounded its own depths—that was ready to pledge itself to, it knew not what, in the very ecstasy of self-sacrifice.

But the girl's dream was not destined to be carried into practice. Either M. de Sévelinges did not understand her, or she did not understand him, and they both expressed themselves in such very guarded, delicate, and ambiguous terms, that they wrote apparently quite at cross-purposes. For, as these wavering seniors frequently do, he seems to have backed out of the negotiation, and Manon's last word to Sophie was, that she hardly knew whether to be offended or not, but ended with a hearty laugh.

To enumerate the many other suitors who came forward one after another to propose for Mademoiselle Phlipon would sound too like the fairy tale of the proud king's daughter, who used to have the claimants to her hand marshalled before her in a row, and refuse them in turn by pronouncing one to be as thin as a pole, another as fat as a barrel, and a third bearded like a goat, till her enraged sire declared that the first vagrant who came begging alms at his gates should have her, whether or no. M. Phlipon at one moment behaved not unlike this incensed monarch. Seeing that a "martial young Apollo," a thriving Greffier des Bâtimens, and a certain M. Coquin, a round-faced, beaming young man, "a good paste of a husband," young and wealthy, if not wise, had all been rejected in turn, he was actually for marrying her to a man who, as she was entering her door, met her casually, and asked whether she could direct him

to a certain house, and, in the course of a day or two, proposed for her to M. Phlipon, through the intervention of friends. "My father," she writes, "did not find it so absurd; what more shall I say? With a little good will on my part, I might have found myself become a vendor of lemonade, and been gloriously installed in a café. . . . Oh," she adds, after a few more comic remarks, "was it worth while to have such a variety of paths to choose from to keep obstinately on the solitary road of celibacy."

Single she was not destined to remain long, however; but before we follow up the story of her acquaintance with Roland, let us cast a glance at the kind of life she now led with her father.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## FLIGHT TO THE CONVENT, AND MARRIAGE.

WHILE all sorts and conditions of men were thus courting the hand of the magnificent Marie Phlipon, was her life so sweet a one as to make her averse to exchange it for a home of her own? On the contrary; the serenity of her studious days became more and more clouded by anxieties, cares, and fears for the future. Her father, the vain-glorious, fickle Parisian, had loved his daughter as long as their interests seemed identical; but they no sooner began to clash than he was ready to sacrifice her future to his caprice. In spite of Manon's efforts to make the house pleasant to him, and to while away his evenings by taking a hand at cards, he found these pleasures tame to those that awaited him abroad. He began absenting himself more and more, formed connections at coffee-houses, lost his business habits, contracted a passion for gaming, and began by spending not only his own savings, but the money which, according to French law, belonged of right to his daughter. Manon, with her shrewd common-sense, saw that, as her father's custom fell off, he tried to retrieve himself by gambling; she suspected, besides, that he was squandering his



money on an illicit connection. To add to her perplexities, she feared that she herself was the innocent cause of his demoralisation, and that, but for her, he might marry again, and once more take to orderly habits.

The event was not one to be desired for her own sake, for she was mistress of the house and herself, in a way quite unusual for French girls; but the hope of rescuing her father from profligacy, improvidence, and an indigent old age decided her. There is something not a little comic in this reversal of the mutual relations of parent and child—the wise daughter pondering how she may suitably marry the flighty papa of fifty-five, and not daring to let him guess her plans, lest he should set himself tooth and nail against them. A suitable woman was discovered, too, and the parties seemed mutually willing; but, the lady being of an undecided turn of mind, nothing came of the affair.

Her uncles, more especially her great-uncle and godfather who was devoted to her, found it necessary to insist on M. Phlipon's taking an inventory of his property, previous to letting his daughter have the share which rightfully belonged to her; but they did it in such a bungling and dilatory fashion that months and years elapsed before any effective steps were taken, and in the meanwhile he had not only frittered away his capital, but come to regard Manon as the cause of these troubles, so that sometimes he hardly came near his house, or, if he did, avoided speaking to her. Her life, however, was an exceedingly busy one, for, while persistently carrying on her studies, she was a most punctilious housekeeper, looked after her father's diminishing custom in his absence, was frequently engaged on some charitable errand or other, and at

one time, in order to procure a holiday for a hard-worked cousin, she offered to serve behind the counter of the husband's shop in her absence. Behold, then, the woman who was to play so momentous a part in one of the most momentous periods of history, trudging backwards and forwards between her house and the Rue Montmartre, in the dusty August weather, diligently selling spectacles and watch-glasses, with a head stuffed full of Socrates and Plato.

Her position was no doubt a unique one; for, while sometimes relegated to the servants' hall when she went visiting with her relatives, she was at others the friend and correspondent of men of high rank and abilities. She took it all very philosophically, and attached herself to right action, she says, "with the zeal and desperation of a man who, in a ship-wreck, clings with all his might to the only plank that is left him." But what wrung a cry from that strong soul was neither unkindness, nor loneliness, nor impending destitution; it was the sense of a great force wasted, of potential powers doomed to perish unused. Once only she bursts forth with, "In truth I am not a little annoyed at being a woman. I ought either to have had another sex, another soul, or another country. I ought to have been a Spartan or a Roman woman, or at least a Frenchman. As the latter I should have chosen the Republic of Letters for my country, or one of those States where one may dare be a man and obey the law only. My displeasure looks very insane; but I feel as if riveted to a manner of existence not properly my own. I am like those animals transplanted to our menageries from the torrid soil of Africa, who, intended to develop in a tropical climate, are shut up in a narrow cage hardly able to contain

them. My mind and heart are hampered on all sides by the obstacles of custom and the chains of prejudice, and I exhaust my strength in vainly shaking my fetters. To what use can I turn my enthusiasm for the public good, when I can do absolutely nothing to serve it?"

Yes; in spite of stoicism, philosophy, and a wise reflection on the noble functions of wifehood and motherhood, was it possible for such a nature as that not to rebel against the tyranny of petticoats? One cannot but be surprised that, with such a sense of native power, predilection for literary pursuits, and facility of expression, Manon should not have turned her pen to practical account. Michelet somewhat captiously makes it a reproach, both to Madame Roland and to Robespierre, that they were born scribblers, and were unable to see, think, feel anything without straightway pulling out their "tablets." It was so, no doubt, and from a very tender age Madame Roland had begun, in her letters to Sophie, chronicling every incident in her inner or outer life. On first opening the two bulky volumes of this correspondence (carefully edited by M. Dauban), written by a young girl leading an uneventful life amid seemingly common-place surroundings, the prospect of their perusal is rather appalling. But this strong nature, through which life continually rushes with a torrent of thoughts, sensations, and feelings, invests the most trivial incidents with fresh dramatic interest. A Sunday afternoon walk to the Jardin du Roi becomes an idyll; midnight vigils, passed in the study of some ancient philosopher, grow astir with action; girlish friendship is invested with the glamour of romance. The more one reads, the more fully does this powerful

nature unfold itself, and such as she is at fourteen shall we find her still at thirty-eight.

Besides her letters to Sophie and Henriette Cannet, often complete little essays in themselves, Marie Phlipon wrote a number of detached pieces, entitled, *Mes Loisirs*, "Leisure Hours." Most of these have been published in her collected works. They are short prose essays, of a reflective and elegiac character, "On the Soul," "On Melancholy," "On Friendship," "On the Close of Day," "Reverie in the Wood of Vincennes," "On the Multiplication of Men being the Cause of Despotism, and of the Corruption of Morals," and so forth. They possess less biographical and even literary interest than the letters, then her favourite style of composition.

But a young lady who was capable of expressing herself clearly and concisely on some of the questions which have exercised the powers of the most robust thinkers, questions which lay at the very root of the approaching crisis, should have been in no perplexity as to her future vocation. Nature had endowed her with a great gift; the trammels of opinion forbade her to make use of it. She rattled her chains and yet had no heart to break them asunder. It was only when by an unforeseen concurrence of circumstances fate had cast her in the very focus of action, when by her daily contact with men at the head of affairs she gradually learned to measure her powers with theirs, that she came fully to realise the extent of her own abilities. But, indeed, at this time she held avowed authorship in horror; and, on being urged by a friend to devote herself seriously to composition, her outburst was that she would sooner cut off her right hand than turn authoress. If a woman writes a good book,

she said, a male writer invariably gets the credit of it; if a bad one, she incurs the full ridicule of failure. She did not perceive that she was one of the few women who could have vindicated the claims of her sex, and in this respect she showed less originality than Mary Wollstonecraft and Madame de Staël, her juniors by a decade or so. In later life she considerably modified her views, and bitterly regretted having no time left to write, as, "if she could not be the Tacitus, she might, perhaps, have aspired to be the Mrs. Macaulay of the French Revolution."

At the same time we must bear in mind that it was not the literary or æsthetic, but the moral side of life which possessed the greatest attraction for Madame Roland. In her judgment the life of woman as wife and mother always appeared the highest and best. She perceived that every concentrated effort of the imagination tends to isolate the individual, and to disturb that equilibrium of the faculties which essentially constitutes the harmony of life. She considered no function more important than that of the woman of fine nature and cultivated faculties regulating a household or estate, with many people depending on her care and management, bringing up children in the consciousness that in them her soul is moulding the future of the race. Because, in the exercise of these duties, the most diversified attributes are called into play, love itself being its guiding principle. This was Manon's ideal of life for a woman, and it is practically that of the statesman and ruler in miniature.

But the very strength of her convictions as to the duties of wifehood and motherhood rendered marriage more difficult to her. Her decided views as to the bringing up of children made her very critical as to

the partner who wished to share this responsibility. About all this she spoke in the frankest way to her friends. It seemed, therefore, that she would soon be reduced to teaching or needlework, that last resource of destitute women. Her father's dishonest waste had now reduced the savings of thirty years' labour to about five hundred and eighty pounds. Worse than this, M. Phlipon had lost all his custom, and, what was a greater affliction to his daughter, his honesty into the bargain. "I don't know how it is," she tells Sophie, "but every time my father gives me a fresh cause of annoyance, I feel an impulse of tenderness towards him, which seems to be there on purpose to enhance my suffering." Her friend, in trying to comfort her, remarks that the faults of our children are more humiliating to us than those of our parents, but added a remark calculated to cut Manon to the quick, that "from our birth we are destined to wear the moral liveries of our parents!"

Poor Manon's best anodyne was an increase of benevolent activity. She was always at this time engaged in some active work of charity or other; now visiting some destitute woman or spending her dress-money on some deeply-indebted father of a family. She was now approaching the time of her majority, fixed at twenty-five by the French law. Even her dilatory relatives felt it necessary to take some decisive steps to bring about a division of property in favour of the daughter. But these steps, by humiliating M. Phlipon, only aggravated the position of affairs. In consequence of this he became so irritated, that at last, in June 1779, he bade his daughter leave his house once and for ever.

This violent threat was not a little calculated to

upset Manon's equanimity. Practical and sagacious as she was, she could not help seeing the insurmountable obstacles which confronted a young unmarried woman the moment she should be cut adrift from her family. For such an one there seemed to be no inch of standing room on her native soil, and she must either be prepared to bow her neck beneath the yoke, or seek shelter in the tomb-like isolation of conventual life. Englishwomen, even at that time, were already acting with considerably more independence, and the brave and beautiful Mary Wollstonecraft, not many years from the present date, settled as a female author in London, "to be the first of a new genus." But Madame Roland's heroism did not consist in braving public opinion; on the contrary, she considered a certain conformity to it as part of the duty which the individual owed to the social compact—duty to which was, from first to last, the motive spring of her actions.

A reconciliation having been effected between M. Phlipon and his daughter, the latter wrote to Sophie:—"The cares and worries of housekeeping are not repugnant to me. With a lively taste for the acquisition of knowledge, I yet feel that I could pass the remainder of my life without opening a book or being bored by not doing so. Let only the home I live in be embellished by order, peace, and harmony, let me only feel that I have helped towards making it so, and be able to tell myself at the close of each day that it has been usefully spent for the good of a few, and I shall value existence and daily bless the rising of the sun."

With her high conception of the responsibilities of marriage, it cannot surprise us that Marie Phlipon could not make up her mind to accept one of the many

'woers who had asked for her hand, in spite of her forlorn position, feeling, as she did, a stumbling-block in her father's way. Yet outlet, save in a makeshift marriage, there seemed none for this grandly organized creature. At first, as we have seen, she had been ready to take the conventional middle-class French view of marriage. Provided that positions were suitable, parents agreed, the man not too repulsive, it seemed as if, in spite of inward misgivings, she must subordinate her own wishes in the matter to what was expected of her. But the more she reflected on the marriage state, the more clearly she came to see that no one had a right to demand of her that she should enter into so close and life-long a union with any person for whom she did not feel love, or at least entertain the highest regard; and, after a while, she was convinced that her duty lay, not in contracting such a marriage, but in opposing it, and then she stood firm as a rock, determined to do the humblest work, the most menial drudgery, to take service if need be, rather than sell herself in marriage for a mess of pottage. At the same time, in spite of her admiration of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which had made her realise the exquisiteness of domestic joys, she was not haunted by visions of romantic love, and had but few illusions in regard to men. According to the severe Roman ideal, she regarded marriage as a union to be entered into from duty more than passion, and from a high devotion to the family, because on the family depended the welfare of the State. But nothing seemed more improbable than that in her circle of acquaintances she should ever have a suitor to meet so stern an ideal.

One day, however, there presented himself, with a letter of introduction from the faithful Amiens friend,



a tall, meagre, rigorous gentleman, of a sallow complexion, already worn-looking, and scant of hair about the temples, but with the unmistakable stamp of character about him. He had the air and manners of a scholar, was careless in his dress, and spoke in an unmodulated voice—Manon was peculiarly susceptible to the sound of voices—with chopped-up sentences, as if he were scant of breath. But as he warmed up in conversation, a benevolent smile lit up his countenance, and the range and thoroughness of his acquirements lent a keen interest to his society. This was Roland de la Platière, of whom Lavater, who saw him some years afterwards in Zurich, exclaimed warmly: “You reconcile me to French travellers.” Inspector of Manufactures at Amiens, he had often heard the Cannets speak of their remarkable friend at Paris, had seen her portrait hanging up in the drawing-room, and at last volunteered to play the postman to this phoenix of girls. On the other hand, Roland’s praises had frequently been sung by Sophie, who said in introducing him—“You will receive this letter by the hand of the philosopher of whom I have spoken to you already, M. Roland, an enlightened man of antique manners; without reproach, except for his passion for the ancients, his contempt of his age, and his too high estimation of his own virtue.”

The first interview took place as early as January 1776, and Manon was impressed by the dignity, uprightness, and pride which stamped his individuality, while his erudition inspired her with admiration. But the dogmatic narrowness and pedantry of his nature did not escape her. He awoke in her neither the tenderness which she had felt for Lablancherie, nor the intellectual enthusiasm *Sainte-Lette* had done.

As compared with the latter, she told her friend some weeks later, "M. Roland is a mere *savant*." Nevertheless, she was not altogether indifferent, and a certain feminine preoccupation peeps out from the following lines, sent to Amiens immediately after this visit:—"Our conversation touched on a thousand interesting topics. I stammered a little, without being too shy; I received him unceremoniously in my baigneuse and white camisole, in that *negligé* which you used to like in the summer mornings. (This was in January.) He may have seen from my manner that I was charmed by his visit; and has asked my leave to come again, which was willingly granted."

The leave was not neglected. M. Roland presented himself again before the fair stammerer within the month. This time she was quite convinced that she had made the most unfavourable of impressions on the critical Roland. Of all the disenchanting accidents that beauty is liable to, she was then suffering from a violent cold in the head, which, next to seasickness, has, perhaps, the most sobering effect on the raptures of love. To add to her discomfort, her father, who never left her on such occasions, if he could help it, and to whom these philosophical talks were *caviare*, fidgeted about the room, till she felt so teased that she had not even sense enough left to put any questions to M. Roland. Everyone knows that the great art of conversation is to ask people the right kind of questions. Only give a man the opportunity of bringing out his pet theories and favourite stories, and he will pronounce you the most admirable talker he ever met. Manon, who possessed the talent of listening, was, no doubt, mistress of the art of drawing people out; but whether she failed on this occasion or not,

Roland not only gave free vent to his opinions, but he startled and shocked her by his contemptuous mention of some of her favourite authors.

On the whole this visit left an uncomfortable impression behind it, and Marie was convinced that it would be the last. Nevertheless, M. Roland repeated his calls, undismayed by disfiguring colds and fuming fathers; possibly, with the obliviousness of men to such sublunary trifles, he had remained in blissful ignorance of them. In May 1776, Manon wrote to her friend that on this occasion she has learned to appreciate M. Roland better. "I have been charmed by the solidity of his judgment, the interest of his conversation, and the variety of his acquirements."

In the summer of this year Roland left France for Italy, where he remained until 1778. He corresponded with Mademoiselle Phlipon during his absence, and these letters, afterwards corrected and revised by both, were published under the title *Letters written from Switzerland, Italy, Sicily, and Malta in 1776, 1777, 1778*. This book of Italian travel is, in Michelet's estimation, the best work on that subject produced in France during the eighteenth century.

The manuscripts of which Roland had made his young friend the depositary, and which consisted in descriptions of travel, sketches of projected works, and personal anecdotes, gave her a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with his mind than a number of personal interviews would have done. They increased her regard for Roland, and on his return from Italy, she found a genuine friend in him. Their relations towards each other were apparently purely those of friendship, and the fact of Manon classing Roland with

Sainte Lette and a certain Boismorel, two seniors whom she venerated for their wisdom and knowledge, shows that the idea of looking at him in any other light was far from her thoughts. Yet the staid philosopher could not come thus frequently in contact with the glowing nature of this magnificent girl without experiencing a stronger emotion than friendship. His feelings insensibly changed, and in the beginning of 1779 he made Manon an offer of his hand. She, who respected and honoured him more than any man she had met, felt highly gratified by this mark of affection. The prospect it opened of passing her life with one guided by the same lofty notions of duty and patriotism as herself, had always been the limit of her aspirations. True, this woman of five-and-twenty, in the full energy of life, would have been capable of a very different feeling from that inspired in her by the grave middle-aged Roland, more than twenty years her senior; nevertheless, it was a marriage in harmony with her preconceived views, and the consideration which prevented her from accepting him at first was not one of sentiment but of pride.

The French custom of the woman bringing a dowry to her husband is so general, that to a proud nature, such as Manon's, the idea of entering the marriage state empty-handed, owing everything to the man she wedded, was almost intolerable. Shrinking from the idea of marrying into a family who would consider M. Roland's choice as one beneath his name and expectations, she put all these objections before her wooer, with the cool impartiality of a third party, and advised him to desist from his suit. To advise a man to desist usually has the opposite effect of making him persist the more obstinately. This happened in Roland's case,

rather more self-willed and obstinate than the generality of men. He, no doubt, told her that he did not wish to wed her dowry or her father, but herself alone ; and, at last, he obtained her consent formally to write to her father. But M. Phlipon's conduct on this occasion showed that whatever good humour and geniality might have originally been his, had now turned into the most unmitigated scoundrelism. Not content with beggaring his daughter, his baseless spite now begrudged her this prospect of a settled home : probably the idea of finding a censor in this virtuous son-in-law galled his vanity. At any rate, after having vainly tried to tease her and flatter her and scold her into taking a husband, he now wrote a rude and humiliating refusal to Roland, of which he only informed his daughter after the event.

This last drop filled her cup to overflowing. She considered that her father might possibly pay more attention to his business if left entirely to his own devices, and that it would be more becoming in herself to make some kind of livelihood than drift into helpless destitution along with him. No sooner had she come to this resolution than she informed Roland that, fearful of becoming the source of fresh humiliations to him, she begged him to desist from his suit. Thus, without an open rupture, she, at the age of five-and-twenty, left the home which had been such a scene of "carking cares" since her mother's death.

With her vigorous health and robust frame, Manon could laugh at privations, and there would have been nothing very painful in her lot, but that all the avenues to the nobler kinds of work were closed to her, and that, with her incomparable powers, there yet seemed nothing for her to do but, if possible, to teach

“the use of the globes,” and a little feeble music to half a dozen pupils—provided always that she could get them in her rather anomalous position. Young and unprotected, there seemed no course open but refuge in a nunnery. To a nunnery she went, therefore, the same where she had passed such moments of religious ecstasy in her childhood, but now in how different a mood and mental attitude! Permitted to become an inmate without sharing in the conventual life, she, for twenty *écus* a year, hired a small apartment, which was perched under the roof like a swallow's nest.

In the beginning of November 1779 she took possession of this dwelling-place, and her poverty was so great that some potatoes, a dish of rice, or a few haricot beans, prepared by herself with a little butter and a pinch of salt, were her sole fare. Insufficiently nourished, poorly clad, and solitary, she neither lost her courage, nor her gaiety, and, curled up on a high school desk to look out over the snow-covered roofs of Paris, she, from her lofty perch, could see the people moving like midges through the white, narrow thoroughfares, or at times would seem very near to the beatified calm when the great, still, winter moon flooded her little garret with a solemn splendour. The narrow street in which she lived, the *Rue Neuve Saint Étienne*, was canonised by the memories of such men as Pascal, Rollin, and Bernardin de St. Pierre, and here, with the clear chant of the young novices, and the loud-resounding organ-peals, sometimes floating up to her, she passed the short bleak days and long cold nights, “armed with her pep, surrounded by scattered papers, in the company of a Jean Jacques and a grand Xenophon,” and knew such thoughts as are only given to strong souls fearlessly breasting adversity.

Only twice a week did she emerge from the convent walls ; once to call on her father, whose linen she took away to mend, and once to pay a visit to her aged relatives. For months she never varied the monotonous tenour of her life, but trusted that in the course of time she would get some pupils and be able to reconcile the nuns to such an unusual proceeding. In the meantime she tried to fit herself more thoroughly for this task. Her friends in Amiens entreated her in vain to come and make her home with them. They had advanced her a little sum, sufficient to enable her to move at all, and she was delighted to owe this to their friendship. But, imperceptibly, her confidences to Sophie and Henriette had grown less expansive. She, who had been wont to descant so freely on everybody and everything, was grown somewhat reticent, and Sophie felt and fretted under the change, in spite of Manon's assurances of her unaltered feelings.

Her tongue was tied in regard to Roland. She intuitively felt that his proud nature would resent her enlarging too freely on him in her letters. She was in honour bound to keep the secret of his offer and rejection. For months now he had made no further advances, though he knew of her retirement to the convent, and continued writing to her. A very ardent lover, guessing, one would imagine, that the lady he wished to marry had left her father's house on his account, would, without a moment's hesitation, have presented himself at the convent gates, and, similar to the knight in the ancient ballad, have lustily knocked thereat till his love had perforce come out to him. Not so M. Roland. No doubt he would have considered it undignified to do anything in a hurry, or from an impulse of passion. He had waited four years before

he made up his mind to ask Manon to marry him, and now he coolly waited six or seven months more to reconsider his resolution. Her letter had, perhaps, too ably put before him all the disadvantages of such a connection. The fatal cogency of Manon's arguments seems to have had a sobering effect on her suitors generally. But certainly Roland would have been more lover-like if, scattering all arguments to the winds, he had at once pressed his suit more hotly than before. The six months' delay did him an irreparable mischief. Madame Roland confesses "that it stripped every illusion from such sentiments as she had entertained for him." He came at last, however, conversed with the recluse behind the grating of the convent, saw her looking more blooming and brilliant than ever in her sober garb, and felt all his old feelings reviving with increased force at sight of her.

On the 27th of January 1780, Manon wrote informing her friends of her engagement. Her letter, devoid of any vibration of passion, breathes a spirit of calm content. "A succession of sweet and manifold duties will henceforth fill my heart and every moment of my life; I shall no longer be this isolated creature, lamenting her uselessness and striving to prevent the ills of a morbid sensitiveness by incessant activity." In her *Memoirs* she says: "If marriage, as I considered, were a stringent tie, an association where the woman undertakes to make the happiness of two people, was it not possible that I should practice my courage and abilities in this honourable task rather than in the solitude wherein I lived?"

These reflections were, no doubt, wise and sensible enough, but, concerning this marriage, one might say, in the words of Lord Beaconsfield: "It was not in the



nature of things that she could experience those feelings which still echo in the heights of Meillerie, and compared with which all the glittering accidents of fortune sink into insignificance." Not for any glittering accidents of fortune, certainly, did Marie-Jeanne Phlipon wed the austere Roland, but from a sense of devoting herself to the happiness of an honourable man and of making his life sweeter to him. She was a Julie making an offering of her life's happiness to Volmar, and yet—she had never loved!

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE CLOS DE LA PLATIÈRE.—JOURNEYS TO  
ENGLAND AND SWITZERLAND.

THE family into which Gatien Phlipon's daughter married on February 4th, 1780, came of a good old stock—many of whose members had had titles that lapsed with their lifetime—but which had gradually become impoverished by extravagance. Roland, the youngest of five brothers, had been destined for the Church, but, feeling no vocation for it, he fled from his father's house, and was fortunate enough to obtain a situation in the office of one of his relations, who was superintendent of a factory at Rouen. In this house, which possessed many ramifications, Roland became deeply versed in the different branches of commerce, in manufactures, and in the principles of political economy. Scrupulously conscientious, painstaking, and observant, he steadily rose in his office, and, having been made inspector of manufactures, part of his time was spent in foreign travel, to study the improvements of industry in the interest of his Government.

Although from youth upwards Roland had been chiefly mixed up with practical life, he was a student

by nature, of retiring habits, reserved manners, and a reflective turn of mind. Yet his philosophy was not incompatible with much irritability of temper, owing, in part, to derangement of the digestive functions. Monsieur and Madame Roland passed the first year of their marriage in Paris, where the latter's time was quite engrossed by participation in her husband's work, and the little cares and vexations incident to a fresh kind of housekeeping, with slender means in furnished lodgings. She had less leisure than in her maiden days for inditing those long epistles to Sophie, which now gradually shrank, till they ceased entirely on her husband's return to Amiens. Madame Roland had looked forward with much delight to the society of Sophie and Henriette, when she should be in the same town with them ; but, morbidly jealous, at this the beginning of their union, of any affection not given to him, Roland exacted a promise that she would see as little as possible of these dear friends of hers. She resigned herself to it, and, in fact, hardly ever left her husband's side. Living in the same room, studying the same books, sitting at the same table, she wrote to his dictation, copied and revised his manuscripts, and corrected his proofs. This life of constant application was only varied by an occasional walk out of the gates of Amiens. The great discrepancy of age between Roland and his wife gave the former an undue authority in their relations, and for several years after their marriage Madame Roland never ventured to contradict him for fear of seeing a frown clouding his brow. But, owing to this habit of doing everything in company with his wife, Roland became at last incapable of doing anything without her, so that her genius insensibly gained the influence due to it by nature.

"By dint," says she in her Memoirs, "of occupying myself with the happiness of the man with whom I was associated, I felt that something was wanting to my own. I have never for a moment ceased to see in my husband one of the most estimable persons that exist; but I often felt that similarity was wanting between us—that the ascendancy of a domineering temper, united to that of twenty years more of age, made one of those superiorities too much."

They remained four years at Amiens, and it was there that Madame Roland's only child, Eudora, was born, in October 1781. Contrary to the universal French custom of sending children out to nurse, she had always considered that mothers should perform the duty of nursing their own offspring, and now, in spite of violent suffering, she persisted in doing so. During her stay at Amiens, her dear friend Sophie—whom Henriette, however, seems gradually to have eclipsed in Madame Roland's affection—married a certain Chevalier de Gomiecourt. Henriette, although of a warmer and more impulsive temperament, eventually united herself to a man of seventy-five, and in the last days of Madame Roland's life evinced a heroism of friendship which places her on a level with her famous friend.

In 1784 Madame Roland, it seems, went to Paris for the purpose of obtaining *lettres d'anoblissement*—the grant of permanent, indefeasible, and hereditary nobility—various members of Roland's family having held offices which made each of them personally a noble without the title being hereditary. She failed in this, for Roland's stiff-necked persistence and rigorousness of principle had made him very unpopular with his superiors; but it was afterwards

made one of the accusations against him by the partisans of the Mountain. Madame Roland succeeded, however, later in obtaining her husband's transfer to the inspectorship of Lyons.

Before settling in the Beaujolais—where Roland's family still possessed a remnant of their property in the Clos de la Platière—Roland decided on taking his young wife on a trip to England. He himself, an accomplished traveller, would now enjoy giving her the benefit of his large experience.

England was at that time the political lode-star of almost every Frenchman with any share of public spirit in him. Our Constitution, our representative system, our liberty of the Press, our home life, were all studied with admiring envy by a nation which, through long-continued misgovernment, seemed almost on the verge of political dissolution. Towards England were turned the eyes of statesmen, ministers, pamphleteers, journalists. To England it was that political writers, in imminent peril of the Bastille—such men as Brissot and Linguet—came for safety and shelter. To England, too, came Marat, where, in 1774, he wrote and published his *Chains of Slavery*. Rousseau alone had not shared his countrymen's enthusiasm for this country, and under the trappings of liberty he beheld and pointed out horrible sores and social wrongs masked by a semblance of national prosperity.

Madame Roland was eager to see this native land of liberty. In her girlhood she had studied De Lolme's *History of the English Constitution*, and the book had made a lasting impression on her mind. She came prepared to admire everything, from the eloquence of the House of Commons to the powderless yellow curls of cherub-cheeked children in the parks.

On the 1st July 1784, the Rolands landed at Dover, and her first remarks on the country are such as would not occur to women in general. "The soil of the environs," she says in the Journal written on this occasion, "perfectly resembles that of the Boulonnois; light, poor lands over a bed of sand and chalk; the country hilly, entirely broken into sinuosities, which diversify its surface in a striking manner; it is precisely the same soil on either side the water. But a traveller may soon observe which is the best understood and most improved culture. A small breed of sheep were grazing on the downs; they are quite different from ours; the legs short, the body compact, a great deal of wool, even underneath them, the head crowned with a ruff, from which it seems to issue as from a cowl, small ears thrown back into this tuft of wool—this is what at once distinguishes them from other breeds."

The country from Dover to London, by way of Canterbury, in a stage-coach, delighted Madame Roland. Nothing escaped her notice, from the trim-clipped hedges, sleek green fields and hop-gardens to the snug Kentish villages, where every cottage boasted its neatly-kept garden, and "every cabbage had its rose-tree." Some curious glimpses of English manners, as they were just a hundred years since, are afforded by Madame Roland's account of her tour. It sounds very strange and quaint to hear of "watchmen that walk about with a rattle, a lantern, and a long white pole, calling the hours as they struck." These were the flourishing days of highway and other robberies, and our traveller remarks that well-to-do persons, leaving town in the summer, "expect to find their houses robbed on their return; and that, for precaution's sake, they carried what is called *the*

*robber's purse* along with them, intended to be given up to them in case of an attack. It is here as it was in Lacedemonia, to the vigilance of every individual is left the care of avoiding these little daily losses ; besides, it would be apprehended that every well-armed guard, every means of police or of rigour, at first established for the safety of the citizens, would shortly become an instrument of oppression and tyranny." To the Republican-minded Frenchwoman, chafing under the grinding centralization of her own government, this practice of self-help seemed then the paradise of public life. Deeply impressed with the Houses of Parliament, she was present at a debate on the East India Company, when she heard the young Prime Minister Pitt, and Fox, his eloquent antagonist.

Westminster Abbey, with its monuments to great men, the British Museum, the Royal Society—the President of which, Sir Joseph Banks, the Rolands were very intimate with—all gave to Madame Roland the impression of a proud, vigorous national life. Ranelagh, so charmingly described in Miss Burney's *Evelina*, was then the *rendezvous* of fashionable society, and Madame Roland was as pleased with the tone of quiet good-breeding pervading these assemblies as with the energy and passion displayed in the public meetings. In fact, in her eyes, as in those of so many of her countrymen, England was then the model nation. Brissot, who, some years afterwards, became the intimate friend of the Rolands, and leader of the Girondin Party, was, about this time, leading a retired yet busy life in the neighbourhood of Brompton, delightedly inhaling its pure country air, and congratulating himself on his happiness in enjoying freedom of thought, instead of living in constant apprehension

of the bolts and bars of the Bastile! The grim towers of the Bastile, the impassable moat of the Bastile, the dumb, dull grip of the walls of the Bastile—this was the dreaded object which cast its deadly shadow on the muzzled thought of France! This was the living tomb from which they shrank back aghast, and which made so many of them, as soon as they touched English soil, breathe our heavy, fog-laden, smoke-begrimed atmosphere as if it were the very elixir of life. Had Burke been bred in the shadow of the Bastile, and felt the iron of its chains enter into his flesh, he could never afterwards have made all Europe re-echo to the declamatory blasts of his vehement invective against the French people.

In the beginning of August 1784, the Rolands returned from the political land of Goshen to their own poor, suffering country, then so miserably “cabined, cribbed, confined”; and Madame Roland writing of this tour remarks, flatteringly to English feelings: “I shall ever remember with pleasure a country of which De Lolme taught me to love the constitution, and where I have witnessed the happy effects which that constitution has produced. Fools may chatter, and slaves may sing, but you may take my word for it that England contains men who have a right to laugh at us.” Her admiration of Englishwomen is expressed in glowing terms to Bosc: “I wish to heaven I had you in England: you would fall in love with all the women. I was very near doing so, in spite of being one myself. They bear no resemblance to ours, and have in general that oval form of countenance which Lavater commends. Take my word for it, that the individual who does not feel some esteem for the English, and a degree of affection mixed with admi-



ration for their women, is either a pitiful coxcomb, or an ignorant blockhead who talks about what he does not understand."

A few weeks after their return from England, the Rolands removed from Amiens, and Madame Roland's correspondence with the excellent and faithful Bosc, the friend she had made there, contains most of the materials for her life between 1782 and 1790.<sup>c</sup> Bosc, like most men who knew her, felt the magnetic attraction of this noble woman, and never swerved in his fidelity to her. When she accompanied her husband to Villefranche, the severing of their intercourse cast him into profound dejection, and it was only little by little that her friendly letters, pervaded as they are by a spirit of calm fortitude, restored him to a state of greater equanimity.

The next few years were passed by her and her husband either at Lyons, the Clos de la Platière, or Villefranche, a provincial town five miles from Lyons, where the Rolands had a family mansion, then inhabited by Roland's mother—who was the same age as the century—and by a very pious elder brother. Roland, who had been for years on bad terms with his conservative family, sought a reconciliation on his marriage, and now came to live with them, although he and his radical wife felt like ducks out of water amidst the retrograde society of the place. Villefranche, far removed from the strong, central pulsation of French life, insignificant even when compared with such a town as Amiens, was, in some respects, a little depressing to the daughter of Paris.

Madame Roland's time at Villefranche was even less at her own disposal than during any other period of her life, and she had very little leisure to devote to the in-

tellectual pursuits so congenial to her. Owing to her mother-in-law's great age, the entire charge of a large household devolved upon her; and this household had to be ordered, not in conformity to her own tastes, but in every minutest particular according to the whims and crotchets of a terrible octogenarian lady, whose tongue and temper more than equalled that of the typical mother-in-law. The brothers, too, did not hit it off very amicably, the elder having as great a passion for domineering as the younger for independence. However, Madame Roland did her best to bring these discordant elements into harmony. Her first care in the morning was her child's and her husband's breakfast; then, leaving them both at work in their respective ways, she went to see after her household affairs. At the stroke of noon the dinner was bound to be on the table and they to be dressed for it, or woe betide! This latter formality, however, was accomplished by Madame Roland in about ten minutes, after which she would sit and talk with her amiable mother-in-law till the arrival of visitors—for the old lady was passionately addicted to company. When thus set at liberty, she retired to her husband's study, where she helped him with his literary work, and collected materials for his articles in the *Encyclopédie Nouvelle* to which Roland largely contributed, and for which her beautiful hand penned many a page on such unattractive subjects as "Peat," "Furs," "Manure," &c. &c.

This was no doubt a monotonous, sober, if not sombre, kind of existence for such a glowing nature as Madame Roland's. Sometimes she must have yearned for a richer life or even for the golden leisure of the little closet on the Quai de l'Horloge, when she could revel at will in the classics or in the pages

of Rousseau. But now had come more austere days ; literature had to be laid aside, music and Italian were becoming rusty, yet in the fulfilment of all its duties this fine nature always found the highest satisfaction.

She had consolations, moreover, in the close and ever closer sympathy which grew between her husband and herself, and in the ever fresh interest which she felt in her daughter Eudora—who hardly ever left her mother's side—described as being “a pretty little prattler, as full of mischief as a monkey,” and who seems to have taken after her father's family in character and temperament. She showed none of her mother's precocious passion for books, but was an incorrigible romp, whose childish doings, sayings, and ailments are as minutely retailed to the friendly Bosc as if he, too, had been a young mother painfully interested in an infant's growth.

Every autumn M. and Madame Roland left the depressing atmosphere of Villefranche to spend some time at the Clos de la Platière, that remnant of ancestral estates. It resembled a farm more than a manor-house, with a low red-tiled roof and projecting eaves, and from its terrace one saw the white outline of the Alps, Mont Blanc, called “The Cat's Mountain” by the peasant folk, towering above them all. The country, dotted about with innumerable hillocks, was planted with vines, and such value as the Clos possessed was due to its vineyard. To the house itself were attached a kitchen garden, an orchard richly stocked with fruit trees, a yard and outhouses, barns and granaries for the harvest and vintage, &c. Here, if anywhere, Madame Roland felt at home in a wide-reaching activity, for as early as 1778 she had written

in her diary: "I never conceived anything more desirable than a life divided between domestic cares and those of agriculture, spent in a healthy and plentiful farm, with a small family, where the example of the master and mistress, and the habit of work in common, produce peace, good-will, and general content.

Now she could at times realise this simple ideal, and her spirits rose visibly whenever she was at the Clos de la Platière—whether in spring, autumn, or even in severe winter weather, when the wide rolling country and valley of the Soane were clogged with snow, and the howling of wolves came from the large forests surrounding them.

Some of the most playful letters ever written by Madame Roland are dated from the Clos, and her life there was not altogether so sad and joyless as the warm-hearted Michelet would have us believe. It was more the life of a farmer's wife, perhaps, than of a lady—not so much a pleasant country holiday passed in leisurely rambles and pleasure excursions, as real unmistakable out-door work, which left barely any time for more studious occupations; but such as it was, it suited Madame Roland's hardy temperament, and through some of her epistles to Bosc there pierces a vein of "sunburnt mirth" quite foreign to her tone in town. Adapting Lafontaine's well-known "*Eh, bonjour, Monsieur le Corbeau,*" she begins one of her letters:—

And good morning to you, our friend! It is long, indeed, since I wrote you last; but, then, I have not put pen to paper within the month, and I fancy that I must be imbibing some of the tastes of the good animal whose milk is restoring me to health. I am growing asinine by dint of attending to the little cares of a piggish country life. I am preserving pears, which will be delicious; we are drying raisins and prunes; are in the midst of a great wash, and getting up

the linen; we breakfast on white wine, and then lie on the grass till its fumes have passed off; after superintending the vintage, we take a rest in the shade of the woods or meadows; knock down the walnuts, and, after gathering our stock of fruit for the winter, spread it in the garrets. Adieu; there is some talk of breakfasting and going in a body to gather the almonds.

On another mellow October day, she thus banteringly addresses the same friend (with a passing allusion to Henry IV.'s letter):—

“Hang thyself, dainty Crillon!” we are making jams and jellies, and sweet wine, and sweetmeats, and you are not here to taste them! These, elegant Sir, are my present occupations. The vintage in the meantime is going on apace, and very shortly it will only be in the cellar of the master, and in the cupboard of the mistress of the house, that the wine and the delicious fruit will be found. This year's wine will be excellent; but we shall have little of it, on account of the visit paid us by the hail: an honour which always leaves a dear and lasting remembrance behind it. Why, pray, do you not write to us? you who have no vintage to attend to; can there be any other occupation in the world beside?

Madame Roland's industry was by no means restricted to the care of her own household, where she was forced by circumstances to practise the strictest economy. Her bounteous activity overflowed the narrow limits of the family circle, and for miles round her unassuming dwelling the peasants looked upon her as a kind of Bona Diva, and turned to her confidently in trouble or disease. Before medical women were thought of, she became the village doctor of her district, and within a circuit of two or three leagues the sick would send for her. Sometimes, in urgent cases, bringing a horse for her to ride, would come a country yeoman, praying her instantly to save the life of some dying relative. Madame Roland deprecates the notion of peasants not being grateful for kindness shown them. She declares, on the contrary,

that she met with the greatest affection in return. And if the court-yard of her abode was often thronged on a Sunday with poor invalids imploring relief, others came too, bringing loving little presents: baskets of chesnuts, goats-milk, cheeses, or apples from their orchards.

Thus the laborious years passed, marked by few outward changes. In 1787 Madame Roland's father died of a catarrh, aged upwards of sixty. He had never become quite reconciled to his daughter's marriage, and yet after running through everything he possessed, he had been obliged to retire on an annuity provided by his son-in-law. The discrepancy of character between himself and the latter must have chafed his self-love all the more that he could not escape the obligations bestowed on him.

In the same year, 1787, the Rolands paid a visit to Switzerland, whither Roland, who was frequently ailing, repaired in search of health. His wife kept a record of her tour, but for us of the latter half of the nineteenth century, to whom Switzerland has become the hackneyed playground of Europe, it contains nothing that is not already perfectly familiar. What does strike one as new and strange is the fact that there were then no big, barrack-like hotels, defacing with pompous tastelessness the beautiful solitude of the Alps. No; the pupil of Rousseau—whose pulses must have beat higher as she trod the sacred ground of Clarens, and “measured with her eye the height of the rocks of Meillerie”—had the good fortune to see the Swiss valleys with their peasantry in their original freshness. So little accommodation for strangers was to be found in the Bernese Oberland, in those days, that the travellers were hospitably entertained

by a good pastor, who, with his wife and seven children, resided in the village of Lauterbrunnen. These kindly people gave the wayfarers (nine of them sat down to their homely fare) of their best, and loaded the flower-loving Madame Roland, who hardly knew how to be grateful enough, with a profusion of roses on parting. Her description of this incident reads like an idyl, as compared with the spirit of greed which now adulterates even the honey from the honeycomb.

The rocks and woods, the valleys and waterfalls, the bristling ravines and rushing rivers, the stillness of the aromatic meadows, only broken by the *ranz des vaches*, the star-bright glory of the Jungfrau and her Silberhorn—all this new world of beauty and grandeur burst on the pure soul of the child of the Seine with a rapture of delight. Her interest was divided between the natural beauties of Switzerland and its political constitution, which engrossed her even more. She got all the information she could concerning the working of republican institutions, the power vested in the Senate, and the character of the elections. After visiting many of the Cantons, she expatiated on the striking differences between the Roman Catholic and Protestant parts of the country, and on the much greater morality and cleanliness prevalent in the latter. The same contrast, only in a more marked degree, she also noticed between the inhabitants of the Swiss Republic and the German Empire, much to the disadvantage of the latter.

After the death of Madame la Platière, Madame Roland passed the greater part of her time at the Clos, her husband being frequently called to Lyons and other places by his official duties. Content apparently to spend the rest of her life in a remote

country place, superintending her household, attending to the vintage, compiling articles for her husband, she was what may be called the highest type of the Frenchwoman—that is, of the Frenchwoman of the middle classes, who, so far from being the frail, fair, and frivolous coquette of the French novelist, is, on the contrary, the most active, practical, and sagacious specimen of her sex. Every traveller in France is doubtless struck by seeing women taking so very large a share in trade and commerce; the actual management of affairs is continually shifted from the husband on to the wife, although it may not be so to outward appearance. They are the exact opposite of the constitutional sovereign, of whom it is said that he reigns but does not govern; Frenchwomen govern but do not reign.

Up to this point of Manon Roland's life we cannot avoid the conviction of a great moral force frittered away on lilliputian tasks: the preparing of dainty dishes for her husband's delicate digestion, the mending of house-linen, the setting a child its lessons—excellent tasks all, but which affect one with something of the ludicrous disproportion of making use of the fires of Etna to fry one's eggs by! It seems, indeed, a curious irony of destiny, that this great woman should have spent many of her best years on things for which so much less ability was required, while so many small people in high places were bungling over the welfare of millions. But such are at present the satisfactory arrangements of society! And in the remote Clos de la Platière, her real strength unsuspected by the world and only half guessed at by herself, Madame Roland would have led her resigned and laborious existence, and died unknown, but for the echoes which,



reaching the arid hill-country of Beaujolais, were reverberated from homestead to hamlet, from market town to seaport, from province to province, till France was shaken from end to end by the thunder of the storming of the Bastile.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## FRANCE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION. .

As the life of Madame Roland will now become part of the History of the French Revolution, let us pause a moment, and briefly review the political and social condition of a people within whose capital stood the Bastille, its fortifications, bristling with cannon, being a visible embodiment of an invisible idea and a system of government. Glancing backwards, we find that the feudal order of the Middle Ages, with its graduated authority—vested in the hands of successive orders of agricultural and military chiefs, subordinated in their turn to one supreme chief, the Sovereign of the realm—had gradually become absorbed in an absolute monarchy. Louis XIV. had put the situation in a nutshell in his famous phrase, "I am the State." The "right divine" of kings had reached its utmost limit under the *Grand Monarque*, whose prestige was such that his frown snuffed out the great poet Racine, and the mere apprehension of whose frown drove Vâtel, the paragon of cooks, to suicide, because the fish had not arrived in time for the King's dinner.

This is the serio-comic aspect of a state of things of

unimaginable wretchedness. The burden of taxation laid on the people ruined agriculture and commerce, and, when whole provinces had been driven into rebellion by intolerable exactions, they were reduced to obedience by means of wholesale slaughter. Madame de Sévigné, in the charming epistles addressed to her daughter, did not dream of attacking the Government; but what a picture of corruption does not that correspondence reveal! Lower Brittany, from sheer inability to pay more taxes, had taken up arms, but was soon reduced to obedience by the King's troops, and no punishment was severe enough for its inhabitants. The brilliant Marquise, in travelling from Paris to her estates there in 1675, saw "peasants hanging on the trees by the roadside," and in her budget of news speaks of "rebels broken on the wheel by hundreds:" so many hundreds being despatched, indeed, that she says in one letter, "They have done hanging for want of people to hang." These "poor Lower Bretons" took it so meekly, too; asked "but for something to drink, a pinch of snuff, and to be despatched quickly; for, indeed," she remarks, "hanging seems a kind of deliverance here from greater evils."

But let the amiable, witty French Marquise beware of too much sympathy for "the despair and desolation" of her "poor province of Brittany"; for even such letters as hers, from mother to daughter, did not escape the watchful eyes of postal spies, and an ill-considered word of compassion, nay, a witticism, might send her to the Bastille, despite her marquisate. Merely for some such trifle, some satirical lines on Madame de Pompadour, had not a certain Chevalier de Bességuier been shut up for years in an iron cage, to endure the torture of neither being able to

stand upright nor of lying down? Who, remembering these punishments, those infamous *Lettres de Cachet*, given in blank by Louis XV. to his minions and mistresses, to be filled in by them with the name of whomsoever they chose—who, I say, remembering this, can help giving the people absolution if in return its retribution was terrible?

The unlimited power of the Sovereign, having sapped the pride of the French nobles, had gradually converted them from a body of responsible landholders into cringing courtiers, who, absenting themselves from their estates—left in the hands of rapacious stewards and land-agents,—came to spend their revenues in Versailles, and to intrigue for place and power by paying court to the King's reigning mistress. It was while performing her toilet that Madame de Pompadour received the lords, generals, prelates, and princes of the blood; nor were any of them suffered to sit down in her presence. But, while behaving like curs at court, these same nobles turned into wolves in their dealings with the peasantry, whom they fleeced as if they were so many flocks of sheep.

In describing the relations of the nobles to the French peasantry, it is difficult to speak with more than approximate correctness; for, as each province had its separate laws and customs and fiscal regulations, their conditions were often widely dissimilar, and the discrepancy between Provence and Brittany, for example, was so great, that they were more like two separate countries than provinces of the same empire. Thus, although the peasants were everywhere wretchedly treated, they were worse off in some parts of France than in others; emancipated in this district, while in that they were in the truly purgatorial condition of

what was called *metayers*, being neither bond nor free, so as to be equally deprived of the rights of liberty and the privileges of serfdom; in years of scarcity they were frequently turned adrift by the landowners, whose dues they were unable to pay, thus swelling the appalling host of beggars and vagrants which was one of the scourges of old France. In order to protect society from these famishing hordes infesting the highways and byeways, the most stringent edicts were continually published against them. They were branded like criminals and stuffed pell mell into prisons, dignified by the name of hospitals; where, in conformity to orders, they were forced to lie down on straw in order to take up less room. The indignant Saint Simon wrote as follows to Cardinal Fleury, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century:—"In Normandy they live on the grass of the fields. I speak in secret and in confidence to a Frenchman, a bishop, a minister, and to the only man who seems to enjoy the friendship and the confidence of the King, and is able to speak in private to him. The King, moreover, can be called such only while he possesses subjects and a kingdom; he is of an age one day to feel the consequences of our state; and in spite of being the first King in Europe, he cannot be a great King if he only rules over wretches of all sorts and conditions, with his kingdom turned into one vast infirmary for the desperate and dying."

What a picture is this of the state to which the country had been reduced! And it puzzles one not a little to understand why so rich and fertile a country in France—a country which, after its disasters in 1870, recovered with astonishing rapidity from the ravages of an invading army—should only a century



before have been such a scene of desolation and sterility. But the cause lay chiefly in the rapacity with which the privileged classes had cast the whole burden of taxation on the shoulders of the people. The theory with which they justified this equitable arrangement was that "the nobility paid in blood, the clergy in prayer, and the people in money!" Poor people, whose toil and whose tithes had, in the course of time, helped the Gallican Church to accumulate in lands and money what amounted to more than half the revenue of the kingdom, and which, in spite of its tithes and taxes, was not by any means exempt from shedding its blood on the battle-fields, of which others reaped the glory and the greatness. In the feudal ages, when fighting was the badge of knighthood, there might have been some faint shadow of meaning in this invidious distinction, which became a mere farce after the invention of gunpowder; and the exemption of the aristocracy and clergy from taxation showed, in regard to this society, that it was simply relapsing into a state of natural anarchy—that of the strong preying on the weak without let or hindrance from justice.

Under the closely-woven network of this system of taxation, agriculture and commerce—the two lungs of national prosperity—were stifling for want of room. The ruling powers seemed to resemble nothing so much as those monstrous harpies of fable who, however greedily they fed, were yet gnawed by insatiable hunger. To wring ever fresh subsidies from the body of the people seemed to be the sole business of government. Among the most oppressive of these fiscal grievances (for the system was so obscure and complicated that the high financiers themselves only under-

stopd it in portion) may be enumerated the *Gabelle*, the *Taille*, the *Corvée*, and the *Aides*.

As is well known, the *Gabelle*, a tax on salt, was so oppressively administered, that in some provinces, when this article was scarce, the people, down to every child, were forced to buy a regulation quantity, whether they wanted it or not; whereas, in other provinces, such as Provence, where salt was naturally formed on the coast, soldiers were stationed at certain times of the year to prevent even the cattle from imbibing the saline properties of the soil. The *Taille*, a tax raised on property and income, was equally oppressive, because, as must be remembered, it was a tax raised only on the property and income of the unprivileged classes. Thirdly, there was the detested *Corvée*—the unremunerated service, originally due from serf or tenant to his *Seigneur*—copied by the Government in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the public *Corvées* were instituted. Then might be seen groups of peasants—hungry, sullen, wrathful—pressed like malefactors into the unpaid labour of constructing and repairing the public roads. And while they were making the highways for the easier locomotion of the *Grand Seigneur* and the wealthy financier, their own field of grass or patch of wheat was in the meanwhile ruined for want of the requisite labour. Next came the *Aides*, or subsidies on all fermented liquors, which bore so heavily on the wine trade as to check this, the most productive source of wealth in the country. The vintage was no sooner over than gaugers appeared ransacking the cellars, and confiscating what had not been duly registered and declared. The very owners were taxed for everything but a very small quantity. On entering and leaving towns, on enter-

ing or leaving provinces, along the highroad and rivers, under and over bridges, on entering and leaving wine-shops, the barrel of wine encountered a fresh obstacle. For a system of internal custom-houses formed artificial frontiers, impeding all free circulation of provisions ; so that a measure of wine which in Orléanais was worth one half-penny, by the time it arrived in Normandy cost a shilling !

These taxes were not levied by salaried Government officials, but were let out to *fermiers-généraux* (tax-farmers), who again underlet them to subordinates. Their method of procedure was perfectly arbitrary, and the mere fact that they were not paid, but expected to indemnify themselves when once they had apportioned its share to the Government, gave the rein to such a system of wholesale spoliation, only to be matched in Turkey at the present day, or by the extortions of the prefects in the conquered provinces of the Roman Empire. Adam Smith, who had visited France in 1765, and studied French finances, wrote in his *Wealth of Nations* : "The most sanguinary laws exist in those countries where the revenue is farmed out by the Government."

It is no wonder that under such a system the country was wretchedly cultivated ; that whole regions, in spite of a capital soil, were, according to Arthur Young, mere barren tracts, desolate stretches of dreary bogs and arid wildernesses : that the villages and towns were often but a filthy heap of mud-houses and windowless hovels : that the children in their repulsive rags were, "if possible, worse clad than if with no clothes at all" ; that the countrywomen—in the enforced absence of husbands and brothers, of carts and horses—were condemned to the heaviest field-work, till, dis-



figured and blasted with drudgery, they appeared not so much women as creatures of amorphous shape, and that this extreme poverty of the husbandman, following his plough "without wooden shoes or feet to his stockings," in turn became the insidious worm, gnawing at the root of the tree of national prosperity.

In the *Confessions*, Rousseau incidentally refers to the French peasant's dread of the tax-gatherer's spies, and the premium that was put upon poverty. He narrates how, journeying on foot from Paris to Lyons, he lost his way on one occasion, and, footsore and famishing, besought hospitality of a peasant for payment. The rustic brought him some skimmed milk and rye-bread, saying it was all he possessed. Jean Jacques' hunger being in no wise appeased, and the peasant, drawing his own conclusions from this very genuine appetite, cautiously lifted a trap-door near the kitchen, descended, and reappeared with a ham, a bottle of wine, and a loaf of wheaten bread—a meal to make the traveller's mouth water. But the peasant's anxiety returned on Rousseau's offering to pay him, and it was only after much pressing that he, with a shudder, brought out the terrible words of tax-gatherer and *cellar-rat*. He explained how he hid his wine, because of the *aides*, how he hid his bread, because of the *taille*, and that he would be lost if it were known that he was not dying of hunger. The impression produced by the lot of this peasant who dared not so much as eat the bread he had earned in the sweat of his brow, became the germ of that life-long inextinguishable hatred which Rousseau felt for the oppression of the poor—became the germ of his *Contrat Social*, the little book which kindled so mighty a conflagration.

There was a limit, however, beyond which even the extortions of the tax-collector, the custom-house officer, the gauger, could not proceed; they could not seize where nothing remained to be taken. Yet the public exchequer was empty, the public revenues were exhausted, and still the cry for gold, more gold, was as importunate at Versailles as that for bread, more bread, among the populace. Paris-Duvernoy, one of the ministers of Louis XV., seeing no other way out of the pressing difficulty, at last bethought him of putting a tax, the *Cinquantième*, on all classes without distinction. This tax raised a perfect storm of indignation among the nobility and clergy. Who so daring as to lay a sacrilegious hand on the riches of the Church! The Duke was forced to resign, and a proclamation issued to the effect that all ecclesiastical possessions should now and in perpetuity remain exempt from taxes and imposts! The author of this proclamation was that identical Cardinal Fleury, the confidant of the King, to whom Henri Saint Simon had described the appalling poverty of the realm.

Such was the conduct of the Church at the approach of an imminent national crisis, such the rapacity of a priesthood instituted in the name of Christ, the very core of whose teaching had been not to lay up riches for yourself, but charity, but the sharing in common of the common fruits of the earth. If ever the absolute divorce between theory and practice had the effect of producing in a nation an army of cynics, sceptics, and scoffers, then this effect must have been produced in France at the beginning of the eighteenth century. But while the extravagance and licentiousness of the higher clergy had reached a fabulous extent, the *cures* and village priests were left so badly paid that they often de-

pended for a livelihood on the charity of their poor parishioners: Many of them, in consequence, were among the first who made common cause with the people in 1789—such as that apostolic figure of Claude Fauchet, who preached the revolution with the gospel in his hand.

With an irresponsible government, an effeminate aristocracy, a dissolute clergy, a poverty-stricken people, it seemed that the ruin of the old Régime must bring about that of the realm itself. But to save it from destruction there was yet left one sound and robust limb in the French body politic: the *bourgeoisie* or middle class; although there did not then exist the infinite gradations by which social inequalities are to some degree hidden, or at least made less glaring, in the present day. For, as Arthur Young wrote, "there were no gentle transitions from ease to comfort, from comfort to wealth; you passed at once from beggary to profusion, from misery in mud cabins to Mademoiselle Hubert (a popular actress) in splendid spectacles." Still, from the ranks of the middle class there rose up a small phalanx of men—philosophers, historians, *littérateurs*, journalists: impassioned innovators, doughty pioneers, the light brigade of the Thought Militant of human progress. The very sound of the names of them—Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, d'Holbach, Condillac, Helvétius—still rings upon our ears like so many battle-cries. These were no word-mongers calmly writing by their snug firesides, these were soldiers in the heat of the fight, eager, alert, fevered with action, whose words were their swords, and who too often paid for their audacity with poverty, exile, and imprisonment. They have been much vilified, these brave philosophers, their system has been much misunder-

stood, because, forsooth, it was less a system than a challenge. It may be objected that a Reformation such as Luther had wrought for Germany in the sixteenth century, or a transformation such as Cromwell momentarily effected for this country in the seventeenth, would have been more permanently beneficial than their annihilation of all previous religious and social moulds; but the Night of St. Bartholomew had forced back the advancing tide of thought so long, that nothing could now stem its accumulated waters in their destructive overflow. It is by the sanguinary light of these massacres that we should read the writings of Voltaire and his associates; for thus only their vehement onslaughts, their motto of *Ecrasez l'Infâme*, receive their fitting commentary.

Leader of the minds who inaugurated the revolution of thought, by importing the sensational philosophy of Hobbes and Locke into France, is the ubiquitous Voltaire—the intellectual Briareus of the eighteenth century—the man who did the thinking of fifty heads at least, and who, while assisting the Encyclopædists in their warfare against the priests, yet contrived to seat himself by the thrones of kings. Voltaire's primary service to his time consisted in his sowing division between Church and State, and in his power of making such potentates as Frederick the Great and Catharine of Russia actual accomplices of his assaults on the despotism of the Hierarchy. Thus shielded by Voltaire's supreme dexterity, his comrades could proceed in their perilous undertaking, the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, which, by revolutionising the thought of its generation, fitted the following one to carry thought into action.

Diderot—the son of a blacksmith, himself a smith

in the workshop of thought, who, amid much din and confusion, forged, with his comrades, those destructive weapons afterwards wielded by the Constituent Assembly—was, along with D'Alembert, the directing spirit of the *Encyclopédie*. The former bold and impetuous as the latter was discreet, they succeeded, between the years 1751 and 1760, in spite of Papal denunciations, legal decrees, and State prisons, in completing this engine for the destruction of feudal institutions and theological tenets, and for the propounding of their own systems of nature and society. To free men from the bondage of authority in religion and philosophy, to substitute for superstitious terror a faith in human reason and virtue, to transform regret for a lost Paradise to quenchless belief in the perfectibility of the race, was the prominent teaching of their school. Some of these men called themselves Deists, some Pyrrhonists, some Atheists; but, in spite of clashing divergencies of opinion, they all worshipped at one common shrine, that of Progress. The fact is, that a social rather than a philosophical idea lay at the root of their work, and that, in their efforts to rid their country of the incubus of superstition, they also tore away some of that transmitted inheritance of religious thought around which cluster the most sensitive fibres of the mind. Helvétius and D'Holbach, in the crude and dogmatic exposition of Materialism elaborated in *De l'Esprit* and the *Système de la Nature*, became the exponents of the Necessitarian doctrine, reducing the universe to a fortuitous concourse of atoms and man to an animated machine.

Apart and companionless, "a love in desolation masked—a power girt round with weakness," there came he who appeared in the eighteenth century like

one crying in the wilderness. The most paradoxical and enigmatic figure in literary history, he preached the purification of morals while tainted with the corruption of his age, and composed a lofty theory of education after depositing his children in the Foundlings' Hospital. Jean Jacques Rousseau, possessed, perhaps, above all writers, the magnetism of genius, and Madame Roland is an instance of the paramount influence he exercised on the generation which succeeded his. A child of the people, a vagabond of the highways, a citizen of Geneva, he naturally approached the problems of his time by a road different from that of his compeers. As we have seen, it was his inextinguishable hatred of the oppression of the poor that turned his thoughts to politics, and, if in the *Contrat Social* he seems to reason too much from general *à priori* principles, it must be remembered that, as a native of Switzerland, he had had experience of a form of government which gave to part of his theories a solid basis of fact. His definition of the State as the social compact of *all* its members, who, constituting what he calls the *sovereign*, annually elect in their entirety the *prince* or executive power, has become proverbial. This single axiom, from which the correlative notions of the Rights of Man—Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality—are natural outcomes, became the lever which helped to set the vast forces of the Revolution in motion, as well as the lode-star of its reconstructive tendencies. Rousseau's leading conception is, that Might is not Right, and that, although the power of the strong may enable him to frame laws which force the weak to obey him, the moment the weak becomes strong enough to refuse, he is justified in doing so. Justice, and not expediency,

is the watchword of his political creed, a creed in striking contrast to Thomas Carlyle's equally strenuous teaching that Might is Right: Certainly we, bred up in the Darwinian era, we who have felt the full significance of that modern Shibboleth, the struggle for existence, we who have ached in dull despair at this grim law of life with which Nature, "red in tooth and claw," proclaims that Might is Right—we cannot help smiling at Rousseau's rose-coloured visions of a primitive state of nature, wherein the leopard was supposed to have lain down with the kid, and to which society was exhorted to return. Yet, though we must admit many of his premises to be false and many of his arguments shallow, his conclusion is nevertheless in harmony with the highest conception of justice—justice which, like music, has its origin in the soul of man only, the most purely human of the virtues, and which is the goal towards which society is slowly and painfully working its way.

Another of Rousseau's axioms in the *Contrat Social*, and one which must be noticed in passing as connected with the land question, now of such paramount interest, is the assertion that, "the State, as regards its members, is the master of all possessions by reason of the social contract, which is the basis also of all their rights. As a rule," he says, "to legalise the rights of the first occupier of any lands, the following conditions are necessary: first, that this land should never before have been occupied; secondly, that he should only occupy the amount requisite for subsistence; thirdly, that he should take possession, not by a vain ceremony, but by labour and cultivation, sole indication of ownership which, in default of legal titles, deserves the recognition of others."

Unconnected with the Encyclopædists and unnoticed by Rousseau, there were two men who, without exciting much attention, were then elaborating a system of pure Socialism. Morellet, in his *Code de la Nature*, preached community in property, capital, dwelling-houses, and all requisite tools for labour, State education, and the distribution of work among members of a community according to their strength, and of the means of subsistence according to their wants. The Government of the State was to be modelled in all respects on that of the family, whose members, though unequally endowed with physical and mental strength, share the income in common. Mably, a financier and man of the world, deeply versed in affairs, adopted these views with enthusiasm, in spite of their apparent unpractical Utopianism.

The school of economists and Physiocrats, as they were called, had in some respects a more immediate influence on the politics of the Revolution. The main point of Quesnay, the head of the school, seems to have been identical with Mr. George's proposition, "that all taxation should be abolished, save a tax upon the value of land." Turgot, in some respects a disciple of Quesnay, succeeded in introducing during his ministry (he became Controller General in 1774, after the accession of Louis XVI. to the throne) some economic reforms into the French Administration, as well as in abolishing some of the most scandalous abuses. He removed, amongst other oppressive forms of taxation, that most infamous of all, the *Corvée*; he suppressed exclusive industrial corporations or trade-guilds, whose restrictions and monopolies had been one of the many fatal obstacles to the trade of the country. This last reform was hailed in Paris with



transports of delight. The working-men left their old masters in crowds, and celebrated their emancipation from the bondage of the trade-guilds. After repealing some of the most pernicious laws affecting the circulation of wine and corn in the country, Turgot shifted some part of the imposts on to the shoulders of the privileged classes. These changes, and the prospect of still more daring ones in contemplation, such as the introduction of a new territorial contribution, aroused the animosity of the rich and powerful. Unfortunately Turgot had failed to conciliate the partisanship of the popular party by his opposition to the convocation of the States-General, which was then its unanimous cry. His position having thus become precarious, Marie Antoinette procured his dismissal, and would, if possible, have had him locked up in the Bastile, for no better reason than that he had refused to bestow certain pensions on some of her worthless favourites. Had the nobles and clergy been gifted with some portion of second sight, they would have gone into mourning on that day in May of 1776, the date of Turgot's fall; as it was, they and their opponents were equally jubilant. A few thoughtful minds deplored the event, and among others Marie Phlipon, then a girl of two-and-twenty, wrote to her friend: "I have heard this evening of the resignation of M. Turgot; it vexed and *stunned* me. | One of his financial measures has acted hurtfully on my father's affairs, and therefore on mine also; but it is not by private interests that I judge him. He was so well thought of, so much was expected of his extensive views!" From his retirement at Ferney came Voltaire's cry, "I am as one dashed to the ground; never can we console ourselves for having seen the golden age dawn and vanish. My

eyes see only death in front of me now that Turgot is gone. The rest of my days must be all bitterness."

Two years later, in 1778, both Voltaire and Rousseau died within a few months of each other, and the revolution which they had inaugurated in the spirit took bodily form, and entered on the stormy scene of action in the volcanic Mirabeau, the noble Madame Roland, the inexorable Robespierre.

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## CHAPTER IX.

## THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

LET us return to Madame Roland, who from her solitude in the Beaujolais followed with breathless interest the course of events; the installation of Necker in Turgot's place; the convocation of the Notables; the ineffectual efforts made to extricate the nation from its desperate financial position; and who rejoiced not a little when the Government, having exhausted all its resources, felt driven at last to assemble the representatives of the nation or States-General, which had not met since the year 1614. The winter of 1788-89 resounded with the noise and excitement of these elections. France was in a ferment, as if the assembly of those States would be a cure for all the ills of the people.

The rapidity of events henceforth worked with the inevitable momentum of elemental forces. The elasticity of time was never so apparent in history; when days became equivalent to months, months to years, years to centuries. That the Court and nobility did not calmly view these changes, that they tried their utmost to retard them, may well be believed; but, their prestige having once departed from them, they resem-

bled that magician who, having forfeited the charm, could no longer lay the spirits he had raised. For the French Guards in those memorable days disobeyed orders, broke open their barracks, and marched through the capital crying, "*Vive le Tiers État!* We are the soldiers of the nation."

After this defection of the army, the Royalists found nothing wiser to do than the dismissal and exile of Necker. Lafayette's message to him was: "If you are dismissed, thirty thousand Parisians will bring you back to Versailles." Round the news-shops—whence poured a very flood of papers and pamphlets—in the cafés and public places, crowds of men formed and dispersed and formed again, who all at once flashed into lightning-like action at the cry "To arms, to arms!" uttered by the young Camille Desmoulins, whom we might call the Gallic cock of the Revolution. It was then that the people in a sublime rage battered down the massive doors of the Bastile, and with tears of joy gave liberty to its prisoners; it was then that the National Assembly, kindling with the passion of humanity, abolished in one night—the sacred night of the 4th of August—the legalised wrongs of centuries. "Let those titles be brought to us," cried one representative, "which are an outrage to delicacy, an insult to humanity, titles which force men to harness themselves to carts like beasts of burden! Let those charters be brought to us in virtue of which men have passed long nights in beating the pools so that their frogs might not trouble the slumbers of a voluptuous *seigneur!*" A torrent of generous emotion swept over the assembled deputies: nobles, priests, dignitaries of the law and municipalities, all parties seemed carried away on that irresistible current. The feudal

system with all its iniquitous rights was abolished in fewer hours than it had lasted centuries.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man was the first reconstructive act of the National Assembly, which declared the following principles to be the basis of the new Government. Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in rights. All sovereignty emanates from the nation, and should be wielded for its welfare. The will of the people makes the laws and enforces them by public authority. The voting of taxes belongs to the nation as a whole. Illegal arrests and depositions without trial by jury are abolished. All citizens, without distinction, are eligible for public offices. The natural, civil, and religious liberty of men, and their absolute independence of all authority save that of the law, forbid any inquiries into their opinions, speeches, and writings, as long as they do not disturb order, or interfere with the rights of others.

This Declaration of Rights was adopted on the 26th of August, and its principles were to be embodied in the Constitution which it was the main business of this Assembly to frame.

A combination of three men, by no means united amongst themselves, dominated the Revolution at this the first stage of its progress: Necker—the popular minister, at one moment idolized of the people, and within a few months after his triumphal return to Paris forced to leave it secretly with his wife, a disgraced and heartbroken man; the chivalrous Lafayette—who had won golden opinions by fighting in the American War of Independence, made Commander-General of the National Guards in 1789; and Mirabeau—another Samson, to whose colossal strength alone it seemed given to curb the unloosed forces of the Revolution;

unfortunately he also had his vulnerable point, the Delilah who shorn him of his strength being the Queen by whom he was bribed.

Under such guidance, while many startling yet salutary changes, impossible to enumerate here, were taking place in France; while the pusillanimous nobles fled pell-mell across the frontiers; while the vacillating King, professing adhesion to the Constitution, was secretly conspiring with foreign potentates, Madame Roland was writing to Bosc letters palpitating with hope, fear, and enthusiasm. "Who is the traitor," she cries, "who at this moment minds any business but that of the nation!"

"I believe," she says, in August 1789, "that the honest Englishman is in the right, and that we must have a small touch of civil war before we are good for anything. All those little quarrels and insurrections of the people seem to me inevitable; nor do I think it possible to rise to liberty from the midst of corruption without strong convulsions. They are the salutary crises of a serious disease. We are in want of a terrible political fever to carry off our foul humours. Go on and prosper then: let our rights be declared; let them be submitted to our consideration; and let the Constitution come afterwards."

And again, on the 4th of September, "Your kind letter brought us very bad news; we *roared* on hearing it, and on reading the public papers. They are going to patch us up a bad Constitution, in like manner as they garbled our faulty and incomplete Declaration of Rights. Shall I never, then, see a petition demanding the revision of the whole? Every day we see addresses of adhesion, and other things of that sort, which bespeak our infancy, and

confirm our shame. It behoves you Parisians to set the example in everything; let a temperate but vigorous petition show to the Assembly that you know your rights, that you are determined to preserve them, that you are ready to defend them, and that you insist on their being acknowledged. It is not at the Palais Royal that this should be done; the united districts ought to act; but if they are not so inclined, it should be done by any set of men, provided they be in sufficient number to command respect and to lead on others by their example. I preach to as many people as I can. A surgeon and a village curate have subscribed for Brissot's journal, which we have taught them to relish; but our little country towns are too corrupt, and our peasantry too ignorant. Villefranche overflows with *aristocrats*, people risen from the dust, which they think they shake off by affecting the prejudice of another class. . . ."

The question which was then agitating the whole country was that of the Royal veto. By giving back into the hands of the King the power of *negating* the decisions of the Assembly, the nation seemed to abdicate the power of self-government which it had only just conquered. Fierce and prolonged were the debates in the House; intense the excitement without. The districts began to assemble, as Madame Roland had advised, and to present petitions to the Commune.

But while in the Assembly members were volubly discussing the new Constitution; while the Queen at the famous banquet to the Swiss and other regiments attempted her one supreme effort at fascination; other forces were at work—forces soon to become more potent than either Throne or Assembly.

After the 14th of July, when the National Guard

had been levied in the different districts of Paris, a re-organization also took place in the municipalities of the capital. Each district elected two members, so that the Town Council consisted of 120 members, who took possession of the Hotel de Ville, under the name of Representatives of the Commune of Paris. This Commune, destined to play so leading a part in the future of the Revolution, gradually increasing in number, came to be called "The Council of the Three Hundred."

Although the reform of abuses went on steadily enough, it was impossible to eradicate in a few months the rooted evils of centuries. While the new Constitution was being elaborated, the country, badly-farmed as it was, did not grow more productive than of yore, corn was as scarce, bread remained dear, and trade was naturally more than ever depressed. Madame Roland remarks in her Memoirs how at Lyons twenty thousand artisans had been in want of bread during the first winter of the Revolution. In Paris, to which the needy, the outcast, and the miserable gravitated as to a common abyss, the muffled moan of the homeless and hungry accompanied the deliberations of the legislators.

Side by side with the noble efforts of brave and earnest men, were also at work appetites and passions whose sinister power hurried on the men who appeared to be guiding the State vessel. And could it be otherwise, considering the previous national conditions? Could these men and women who had so long borne the bitterest yoke, who had been accustomed to the spectacle of the most ferocious punishments, when suddenly untrammelled, act with perfect clemency, moderation, or humanity? Had they, indeed, done so, it



would have gone far to prove that the evils of slavery have been grossly exaggerated. So far, however, from the excesses of the populace—at least, in the first years of the Revolution—being a surprise to us, it should more properly be a surprise that, as a rule, they evinced as much good-feeling and tolerance as they did!

Yes, feudal privileges had been abolished and good laws passed, but the populace of Paris was as hungry as before—if possible, a good deal hungrier; and so it came to pass that a formidable body of women marched to Versailles on that memorable 5th of October, when they appeared below the King's palace, and brought him, Marie-Antoinette, and the Dauphin triumphantly back with them to Paris.

This spontaneous bringing back by the mob of the Royal Family to the Tuileries, there to live under their own eye, was probably due to the growing suspicion of underhand plotting. But in spite of rumours, alarms, and political panics, the majority of the people of Paris, as well as of the Representatives, were monarchical; and had the King given his sincere adhesion to the reconstruction of the Government, there are many indications that the final crash of the Throne might have been averted. If we are to believe Camille Desmoulins, there were not a score of Republicans in France at the first meeting of the States-General. However, it seems useless to speculate on the might-have-beens of history. Madame Roland herself never entertained any illusions. Very early she perceived the interests of the Royalist and popular party to be diametrically opposed to each other, and in the summer of 1789 she wrote with her unflinching judgment: "You busy yourselves about a municipality and you

suffer heads to escape which are about to conjure up new horrors. You are nothing but children; your enthusiasm is a momentary blaze; and if the National Assembly do not bring two illustrious heads to a formal trial, or if some generous Decrees do not strike them off, you will all go to the Devil together."

If there is a fierce ring in these words, she, on another occasion, says: "I weep over the blood that has been spilt; one cannot be too chary of that of human beings. . . ." But, terrified at the dangers which menace the new-born freedom of her country, she adds the warning: "The philosopher shuts his eyes to the errors or weaknesses of private men; but even to his father he should show no mercy where the public weal is at stake."

The burning missives addressed by Madame Roland to Bosc and other political friends were widely circulated; the greater portion of them, without the author's name, found their way into the public press. They chiefly appeared in the *Patriote Français*, edited by Brissot, then one of the leading members of the Commune of Paris. As yet personally unacquainted with the Rolands, he had, attracted by the articles in the *New Encyclopædia*, been for some time in correspondence with them.

Brissot de Warville—afterwards the leader of the Girondins—was born at Chartres in 1754. A disciple of Plutarch and Rousseau, he had gravitated to Paris, and, by a strange coincidence, had been fellow clerk with Robespierre in a notary's office. A rapid and discursive writer, who could dash off a political treatise as others would a letter, he was preoccupied from the beginning of his career with questions of public interest, to the detriment of his own. Per-

petually flitting from France to Switzerland, from Switzerland to England, from England to America, he had had better opportunities than most of the French patriots of studying the workings of different systems of government, so as to be able to institute a comparison between them. "The English Constitution, which I had studied on the spot," says Brissot in his *Memoirs*, "seemed to me, in spite of its defects, well adapted to serve as a model to societies desirous of changing their system." Republican at heart, Brissot was no advocate for the Republic in the early days of the Revolution; for he believed in a gradual transition from the old order to the new, and wished that on its completion the Constitution should be given a fair trial by the nation.

Madame Roland, who first made his personal acquaintance in the winter of 1791, hits off his character in these telling lines: "He knew man but not men: was meant to live with sages and to be the dupe of rogues." Such a dupe he had time after time been made, as, for example, during his literary connection with such vile offscourings of journalism as Morande, Lointon, and Latour, the editor of the *Courrier de l'Europe*. This facility of being hoodwinked by designing men afterwards furnished a fatal instrument of attack to his political opponents. "What a pleasant intriguer is that man," says Madame Roland, "who never considers himself nor his family, who is as incapable as he is averse to occupy himself with his private interests, and who is no more ashamed of poverty than afraid of death." This disinterestedness of character kept him in a state of chronic impecuniosity, in spite of his great facility as a writer. Brissot composed whole chapters of those works

hurled like thunderbolts from the Jove-like hand of Mirabeau; he attempted to form an International College in London, with the object of establishing a bond of union between the literary and scientific men of Europe, and, in such works as the *Theory of Criminal Laws*, he advocated the mitigation of punishments; but never did he reap any reward from his many well-intentioned efforts. One reward only, and that worthy his humane character, was awarded him. Into his hands, to his immortal honour be it said, the people gave the keys of the Bastile. Thenceforth Brissot's best energies were spent in disseminating his political principles through the *Patriote Français*.

In the meantime signs and portents did not bode speedy subsidence of the high-wrought waves of political passion. The French people resembled a captive who, after languishing a life-time in the clammy darkness of a dungeon, is too suddenly liberated, and, dazed with the plenitude of light and air, staggers as one intoxicated. Violent reprisals for the past, conspiracies and rumours of conspiracies, pangs of hunger and want, drove the artisans in towns, the peasants in the country, to deeds of arson and bloodshed.

Woe to the *Seigneurs* who had so unmercifully drained the tillers of the soil; woe to the *Tax-farmers* who had sent the labourers to the galley and to the hangman for defrauding the revenue of some pennyworths of salt; woe to the *Regraters* who had greedily stored up vast quantities of grain to sell it at famine prices to the starving poor. The hour of retribution had struck. In the livid smoke of burning châteaux and flaming mansions, the Eumenides seemed to pursue the territorial lords as they

fled in disguise across the frontier from an infuriated peasantry.

The moderate Constitutionalists, shocked at these excesses, concocted a new martial law, which they hoped would serve as a dyke wherewith to stem the steadily-rising tide of the Revolution, as vainly, however, as he who should bid the roaring sea turn its flow.

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## CHAPTER X.

## MADAME ROLAND REVEALS HERSELF.

THE year 1790 brought with it a promise of conciliation and concord. Not in France only were the best natures full of faith in the future, but all over Europe the hearts of men turned with yearning expectation towards the land where mankind seemed taking a fresh start in its development. In England, above all, the sympathy with the French people was widely diffused. The same generous enthusiasm prevailed which blazed forth in 1860 on the liberation of Italy by Garibaldi. Something deeper still, for, as Wordsworth wrote,

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven! Oh times,  
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in Romance!

Wordsworth, in those days drawn across the Channel, nourished such glorious visions of the coming change that the reaction from them overclouded his mind for years, and threw him—as, indeed, it did half that generation—into the opposite ranks of reaction. Coleridge, the future leader of nineteenth-century Toryism, dreamed of establishing a Pantisocracy on the banks

of the Susquehannah; Godwin, not yet "fallen on evil days," incorporated the principles of the Revolution in his *Political Justice*. Fox hailed the storming of the Bastile by the Parisians as the greatest event in history. If such were the feeling of Englishmen, what was the thrill of expectation in those countries adjoining France, still sorely pressed down by the shackles of Feudalism!

In France itself—where all artificial barriers obstructing the free intercourse of province with province had been abolished; where the taxes had been equitably distributed; where the division of the kingdom into districts was the basis of a system of electoral franchise approximately proportioned to population; where the suppression of monasteries, the sale of Church property, and the abolition of feudal rents, not only threw an enormous quantity of land into the market, but, by relieving the small proprietors from the pressure of innumerable trammels, infused the vigour of a new life into agriculture—in France itself, in spite of the vindictive plotting of emigrants and the smouldering rage of the clergy, there was a buoyant hope that, the Constitution once established, the regeneration of the country might be peaceably consummated. Had not the King unexpectedly gone to the Assembly, expressed adhesion to the new Constitution, exhorted them all to follow his example, taken the civic oath, and was not all France likewise about to swear it in a rapture of enthusiasm?

And now, in this spring of 1790, a spontaneous movement, originating in the heart of the people itself, swept the surface of national life with its quickening vernal breath. The conception of no single mind nor the watchword of a party, the

sense of this common national revival imparted the same impulse to the inhabitants of distant provinces. To consecrate the bond of brotherly union, to seal their fidelity to the new Order, to vow mutual assistance in danger or distress, was the motive of these fraternal Feasts, which sent forth holiday-making crowds on joyful pilgrimages to the altars of the Federation. From Brest to Bordeaux, along the heaths of desolate Brittany and through the rich Norman pastures, over the rolling hills and mountainous fastnesses of picturesque Limosin, by the sounding shores of the Bay of Biscay, amid the orange-scented groves of Provence, the people were marching, with waving banners, to the strains of the *Ça Ira*, and converging to centres of meeting in the provincial capitals.

Before the sunrise of May the 30th, in the dewy freshness of morning, patriotic crowds were pouring through the gates of Lyons. As many as fifty or sixty thousand Federates, and two hundred thousand people in all, took their way through the plain bordering the shores of the blue winding Rhone, towards the Altar of Concord, where a colossal statue of Liberty rose through the silvery morning mists. Amid that moving throng of men with their waving flags, of women and girls festively clad, bearing palm-branches and crowned with flowers, there went one, radiant and resolute, stepping out like a goddess of old, herself, in her immaculate strength and purity, the living realisation of the liberty they adored. We know her, walking there by the side of the austere Roland, surrounded by a small group of friends; but the Revolution knew her not as yet, the highest of its heroic hearts.

It knew her not, though already it received her



soul into its own in that stirring narrative of the new Covenant, which, anonymously written by her, appeared in the *Courrier de Lyons*, edited by her friend Champagneux, and of which no less than sixty thousand copies were sold on that occasion. In the letters and manifestoes despatched from all parts of the country to the National Assembly, the spirit which animated these festivities shows itself as a recognition of the natural authority belonging to old age; participation of women in the national life; adoption of the newborn by the Communes in the name of France; renunciation of religious hatreds at the foot of the Cross. The most impressive of all those Feasts of the Federation was that celebrated in Paris itself on the 14th of July 1790, the anniversary of the taking of the Bastile.

The great bond of fellowship in the cause of liberty was nowhere more deeply felt than by the Rolands. They devoted themselves to the propagation of the new ideas, and conceived the plan of an association of a few friends, who should live together and make every effort to enlighten the people as to the changes which had already taken place, and those that it was imperatively necessary to accomplish. Two of them, Lanthenas and Bancal des Issarts, intended joining the Rolands by putting their funds in common, and buying some of the national property that was then selling for, comparatively, a mere trifle. Lanthenas, an amiable young doctor, whose acquaintance Roland had made in Italy, was deeply attached to Madame Roland, whose lead he followed in all things; embodying her ideas in newspaper articles, in public speeches, and by every other means he could devise. His devotion, no doubt, made her more partial to him than she would

otherwise have been; and it is painful to reflect that the man whom she often honoured with the name of brother was the only one who proved untrue to her in adversity. He had been quite contented with her friendship as long as no one else was more favoured than himself; but when, some years later, he discovered that others were preferred, he not only turned against her, but against her whole party. In so doing poor Lanthenas saved himself from sharing the fate of his Girondin friends; but at what a price! His name, having been included in the list of the proscribed, was struck out by Marat, who declared him to be a mean-spirited creature (*pauvre d'esprit*). Lanthenas had once written, "When the people are ripe for liberty a nation is always worthy of it." This foolish phrase turned out clever enough, for it saved his neck eventually. But Lanthenas, if not over-wise, was one of those useful men who can serve a cause well by their zeal and activity on its behalf. Bancal des Issarts, a man of strong, resolute character, had thrown up his profession of notary in order to devote himself more completely to the political questions of the day. In 1789 he had been chosen elector of Clermont-Ferrand, and, in the summer of 1790, became acquainted with the Rolands, when he passed a few days with them at the Clos de la Platière.

Similarity of interests and tastes suggested the plan of their all living together, and, in view of the contemplated association, Madame Roland addressed the following prudent remarks to Bancal: "For the happiness of an establishment in common, either in the country or elsewhere, it is not necessary to find perfect men—that would be seeking chimerical conditions; but it is as necessary to know each other well as it is indis-

pensable that we should tolerate each other. Every situation has its inconveniences as well as its advantages and duties. In seeking the many benefits of an association, we must not disguise from ourselves that we incur obligations in return, and will need virtues which may be more easily dispensed with in solitude."

Roland himself had no misgivings as to the perfect feasibility of the scheme. Bancel, having paid his friends another visit in the autumn of that year, received from him the following hearty letter, which not only gives one the highest idea of Roland's character, but also of that of his friends. It is a glimpse into an ideal kind of life. "What better can you do than join us?" asks Roland. "We should put our lives in common, and multiply our pleasures, inasmuch as there are more of us to enjoy them. You know our plain, outspoken ways, and one does not, at my age, alter when one has never changed. We talk every day of the approaching meeting, and the Church property at Villefranche offers us an excellent opportunity, it being now on sale to the amount of two or three hundred thousand livres; nor need we despair of finding a house. Perhaps we are building castles in the air about it all; but what a pleasant prospect! We will preach patriotism and enlarge people's ideas; the doctor shall carry on his profession; my wife will be the apothecary of the canton; you and I must have an eye to financial matters; and we will all join in exhorting people to union and concord. In doing all this in common, we shall nevertheless enjoy complete individual freedom, convinced that, in order to inculcate the love of liberty, one must be free oneself, and that we should not be so if we entered into an engagement we could not break if necessary."

Nothing seemed wanting now to prevent this pleasant scheme from being carried out. Yet something had happened during this last visit of Bancal to the Clos which had entirely altered the aspect of things. It seems pretty clear that the latter—judging from hints and allusions in their correspondence—had conceived too warm an admiration for Roland's wife, and, seeing the disparity of age between her and her husband, had—with the bias natural to a Frenchman—indulged in the hope of finding his attachment reciprocated. It seems equally clear that Madame Roland, although shocked at the discovery, could not help feeling flattered, nor avoid a certain compassionate tenderness for the man she was now forced to bid renounce all idea of fixing himself in her neighbourhood. This, at least, seems to be the key to the letter she now addressed to Bancal after her husband's invitation.

“It would make the charm of our lives (this association), and we should not be useless to our fellow men. Yet this comfortable text has not put me at my ease! . . . I am not convinced it would be for your happiness, and I should never forgive myself for having troubled it. For it has seemed to me that you were inclined, to some extent, to make it depend on things which seem wrong to me, and to nurse hopes which I must forbid. No doubt the affection which unites sincere and sensitive natures, who share a common enthusiasm for what is right, must give a new value to existence; no doubt the virtues which such an affection may help to develop might turn to the profit of society . . . But who can foresee the effect of violent agitations too frequently renewed? . . . I mistake; you might sometimes be saddened, but you could

never be weak . . . it is the natural impetuosity of your sex and the activity of an ardent imagination that give rise to these slight errors which resemble the illusion of dreams . . .”

The letter continues in this strain, and ends with the suggestive remark that the beautiful days which they have passed together at the Clos have not been followed by others, for since Bancal has left, she says, the thunder has never ceased to growl, its mutterings being ingeniously turned into a symbol of her inner life, as she concludes—“More thunder! How I like the grand and sombre colour given by it to the landscape; but were it terrible instead, I should not fear it.”

Bancal des Issarts, at any rate, never went to live with the Rolands, but put the sea between them by going to England, where he remained for a considerable period, to study, it was said, its political institutions. The correspondence in the meanwhile was carried on briskly enough, and is the chief storehouse of materials for Madame Roland's life from the end of 1790 to March 1792, when her husband entered the Ministry. It gradually became more political in character, and two years from the date of their parting Bancal confided to Madame Roland his passion for a Miss W——, whom M. Dauban, from several indications, ingeniously guesses to have been Miss Maria Williams, who then resided in Paris, and mentions Bancal in her *Recollections of the French Revolution*. Madame Roland, of whom this lady speaks with profound admiration, did everything in her power to advance her friend's suit with Miss W——; but apparently to little purpose, for they never married.

Madame Roland's letters to Bancal in England form

a running commentary on the political oscillations, the intrigues of the Court, the manœuvres of the Constitutional party, the passionate eagerness of the patriots to establish firmly the conquests of the Revolution. Among other things, we hear that the Declaration of the Rights of Man was printed on pocket-handkerchiefs and distributed by thousands; that Roland, who was a first-rate pedestrian, used to go for long excursions with his friend Lanthenas, distributing little sheets and pamphlets to everyone they met by the wayside, and to the people in cottages and country inns.

On the reform of the municipal bodies all over France, the honest and patriotic Roland had been one of the first to be sent to the Hôtel de Ville of Lyons. By his whole previous training, and wide experience of affairs, he seemed eminently fitted for practical politics. When Arthur Young, passing through Lyons at the end of 1789, sought information concerning its silk manufactures, the one man everyone told him to go to was Roland de la Platière. This gentleman he consequently met, and derived so much useful information from him, that he found he had not visited Lyons in vain. "We had a great deal of conversation," he says, "on agriculture, manufactures and commerce; and differed but little in our opinions, except on the treaty of commerce between England and France," adding, what is more interesting to us, "This gentleman, somewhat advanced in life, has a young and beautiful wife—the lady to whom he addressed his letters written in Italy."

The debt of Lyons, whose finances were in as deplorable a condition as those of the rest of the kingdom, amounted to nothing less than forty millions of francs. As the silk factories had suffered much during the first

year of the Revolution, it became necessary to solicit assistance; and, as was natural, the ablest citizen of Lyons was sent as extraordinary deputy to the National Assembly to make it acquainted with this state of affairs. So Roland and his wife left for Paris, where, on the 20th of February 1791, they installed themselves in the *Appartement* of an unpretending house in the Rue Guénégaud, near the Pont Neuf.

No sooner had Madame Roland set foot in her native city than she "ran to the sittings of the Assembly." Keenly, we may believe, did she scrutinise its members. "I saw," she says, "the powerful Mirabeau, the astonishing Cazalés, the bold Maury, the astute Lameths, and the little Barnave, with his little voice and little reasons, cold as a lemon fricassed in snow, to use the pleasing expression of a woman of another century; I observed with annoyance on the side of the *Blacks* that species of superiority which in public assemblies belongs to men accustomed to personal display, to purity of language, and to distinguished manners. Nevertheless the logic of reason, the daring of honest worth, the enlightenment of philosophy, the fruits of study, and the readiness acquired at the Bar, must have assured the victory to the patriots of the *Left*, if they were all incorruptible and could remain united." Could remain united! aye, there was the stumbling-block.

The Right, or Blacks—so called because the emigrant princes and nobles wore black—then represented the party of the Moderates, who, so far from wishing to move another step in the direction of progress, were only anxious to stop still, or, if possible, to retrograde gently. In the Left there were (as yet indiscriminately mingled) men destined in the lapse

of one short year to become mortal enemies. Amongst those signalled by Madame Roland was left out one who, destined to be borne higher than any on the revolutionary tide, sat as yet inconspicuously on the back benches of the Assembly. Robespierre belonged to that small section of the extreme Left at whom the Jupiter Tonans of the Constituent Assembly once hurled his admonition of "Silence, you thirty votes." But Mirabeau had scanned that impassive figure—cadaverous in its pallor, sternly pressing forward in one straight line, deviating neither to the right nor left—and had uttered the memorable words: "That man will go far, for he believes every word he says."

Now began the potent influence which Madame Roland exercised on the Revolution. She was no sooner settled on the third floor of the Rue Guénégaud, than her house became the centre of a most advanced political group. Dominant female figure of her time though she was, 1791 was the year in which women played the most marked part in the Revolution. The philosophical disquisitions of the *salons* had not yet been overborne by the martial enthusiasm of 1792 and the gathering Terror of 1793. The social life of Paris was still in its fullest bloom, though the *salons* of 1791 differed entirely from those famous gatherings presided over by such female wits as Madame du Defand and Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse; sparkling literary anecdote and philosophical speculations had been superseded by political and social questions. Each shade of opinion had its appropriate meeting-place. Royalism was represented in the splendid mansion of the Princesse de Lamballe. The focus of the Constitutionals was at the *salon* of the youthful Madame de Staël, already in her twenty-fifth year a leading political power.



The philosophy of the Revolution found its highest expression in the group that gathered round the lovely and lovable Madame de Condorcet, who had so sincerely given her heart to the great movement that she was able to incite her husband to the composition of his noblest work, while he was daily expecting to be dragged to execution. Then there was the Cercle Social at which ultra-revolutionary and social theories were chiefly discussed. It was attended by an enthusiastic crowd of men and women, and amongst them was a Dutch lady, a Madame Palm-Aelder, who claimed political equality for her sex, a claim worthy to be made of the Revolution, and which the fervid and excitable Olympe de Gouges—who always sided with the weaker party—seconded by those telling words: "Women have surely the right to ascend the platform since they have that of mounting the scaffold."

Above these varied figures Madame Roland towered, representing, as she did, the pure Republican ideal. Coming from the country, where her great powers had lain dormant so long, coming with the bloom of her enthusiasm still fresh upon her, with energies unblunted, and a heart whose capacity for emotion had but grown by long self-suppression, she now scanned with keenest attention the various actors in the thrilling political tragedy whose heroine she was destined to become. Her scrutiny disappointed her. Too critical to cheat herself with illusions, she nowhere discovered the man at once great and disinterested enough to regulate the terrible clash of class with class, and to evolve a fresh order from the threatening chaos.

The little gatherings at Madame Roland's apartment were far too modest to bear any likeness to a *salon*.

Four times a week a small knot of men used to meet there to discuss and concert measures in connection with the political questions of the day. The fair hostess herself sat at a little table apart, engaged in needle-work or else busy with her voluminous correspondence. If we are to take her word for it, she never joined in these discussions, but neither, in spite of her other avocations, ever lost a syllable of what passed. If she had not the faculty of being in two places at once, she must certainly have had some of Cæsar's genius for doing more than one thing at a time. And as she listened to this interminable talk, leading apparently to no practical results, her impatience often became such that she was forced to bite her lips to avoid bursting into speech, and sometimes only refrained with difficulty from boxing the philosophers' ears.

Among the men who most assiduously attended these gatherings was Brissot, whom Madame Roland now first saw face to face. His appearance and manners harmonised perfectly with the idea she had formed of him from his writings, although it struck her "that a certain volatility of mind and character did not entirely become the gravity of philosophy." Thither also came placid, ruddy-faced Pétion, honesty personified, ere long to be made the idolised mayor of Paris, and not long after to become the fugitive outlaw hiding his premature white head from pursuit. He was usually accompanied by his fellow-townsmen Robespierre, ever scrupulously neat, with his powdered hair, the striped olive-green coat enhancing his bilious pallor, saying little, but drinking in everything that was said, and breaking now and then into his wintry smile. Madame Roland noticed that, at the Jacobin Club, Robespierre would often make use as his own of the arguments and

ideas he had heard overnight; but she excused it as arising from the conceit of youth, and occasionally teased him about it. Pétion and Robespierre, both members of the *Constituante*, had always belonged to the most advanced party in the Assembly, and on its dissolution they were triumphantly carried off on the shoulders of the people. Buzot, elected at Evreux, where he was born in 1760, also belonged to that small minority of the "thirty votes." Of all the men Madame Roland came in contact with, he was destined to exercise the greatest influence on her future life.

Mirabeau had passed away in April, and with him the massive pillar that had helped to prop the monarchy. Mirabeau's advice to the King had been to escape from Paris, advice followed by the Royal Family on the 20th of June, when they secretly escaped from the Tuileries, and directed their flight to the north-eastern frontier, where the Marquis de Bouillé, from his headquarters at Metz, was to have come to the rescue of the King. The world is familiar with the story of this thrilling flight; with the trivialities which, delaying it by an hour or so, rendered the well-concerted scheme abortive; with the recognition of Louis XVI.'s transparent disguise by Postmaster Drouet; with the latter's headlong nocturnal ride, and arrival at Varennes before the lumbering royal berline, where he successfully stopped under the gloomy gateway of that town; the seizure of the Royal party and their conveyance back to Paris by national guards, with the two deputies, Barnave and Pétion, sent to protect them from the fury of the mob. This anomalous procession moving along the sweltering highways, past the ever-renewing throngs of people with angry, menacing

faces ; faces stamped with the degradation of centuries, whose inherited hatred flashed in deadly looks from innumerable eyes, stabbing the King's soul with thrusts more terrible than are dealt the body with weapons of steel.

This progress through an inimical people by a sovereign who had violated his oath was in reality that King's *déchéance*, or, more truly, his moral decapitation. It was impossible that Louis XVI. could recover a shred of authority after so signal a collapse ; although one cannot help wishing that he had made good his escape across the Rhine. Madame Roland and Brissot hoped for nothing better. On the 22nd of June she wrote to Bancal : " The King and his family are gone ; it is far from a misfortune, if we act with good sense, energy, and union. The mass of the people in the capital feel this, for the mass is sound and has accurate perceptions ; so much so that yesterday the indignation against Louis XVI., the hatred of kings, and the word Republic, might be heard on all sides." Madame Roland in writing to Bancal says that to replace the King on the throne would be sheer folly and absurdity : that now is the time to amend the errors of the Constitution : that they could never elect *Monsieur*, d'Artois, Condé, or the vicious and despised Orleans as Regent : that the King should be deposed and detained in safe keeping, the people indicted who assisted in his flight, and that, in order to insure the regular working of the Executive power, a national President should be temporarily elected.

Her life-long aspiration after the Republic seemed about to be fulfilled. She and her friends were ardently looking forward to its establishment. The people now began loudly clamouring for the *déchéance*,

or deposition. It was proposed that a petition to that effect should be drawn up, signed by thousands on the Champs de Mars, and sent up to the Assembly. It was from the Jacobin Club that the cry for the *déchéance* rose most unanimously. Strange, impressive sight this, of a club of Revolutionists holding their debates in the church of a former Jacobin monastery, whence this new order of a Church Militant took its name. On the 13th of July a promiscuous crowd from the Palais Royal, and other centres of agitation, was closely packed in the sombre, ill-lighted vault, where, pre-eminent among tombs of buried monks, was a monument to Campanella, the great sixteenth-century apostle of religious liberty, whose spiritual presence there was a kind of consecration. Brissot seemed to grow with the moment, and in a memorable burst of eloquence carried the whole assembly with him.

Brissot, without absolutely attacking the monarchical principle, insisted on the necessity of the King's deposition, and ended by reassuring public opinion on the dangers which threatened France from without by a luminous exposition of the critical state of Europe. Madame Roland, who was present, describes the solemnity of this meeting, "when they all, with inexpressible enthusiasm—kneeling on the ground and with drawn swords—renewed their oaths to live free or to die." And, describing Brissot's extraordinary success, she exclaims: "At last I have seen the fire of liberty lit in my country; it cannot be quenched again . . . I shall end my days when it pleases nature." My last breath will still be a sigh of joy and hope for the generations to succeed us."

The outcome of this meeting was a monster petition

to demand the *déchéance*, to be signed at the Champs de Mars on the following Sunday. In the brilliant sunshine of the 17th of July crowds of holiday-makers began to collect, and Madame Roland, who went there herself in the morning, bears witness to the peaceable demeanour of the citizens prepared to sign the petition. But a dreadful change soon came over the spirit of the scene. Two mysterious individuals discovered in hiding under the hollow structure of the Altar of the Federation gave rise to suspicions of the most ominous kind in the minds of the populace, and, seeing they refused to confess what had brought them there, they were struck down by some infuriated patriots, or, as others suspected, by villains set on for the purpose of bringing about a massacre. For this murder, the rumour that Lafayette had been wounded, and some stones thrown at the National Guards, sufficed for the unfurling of the *Drapeau Rouge* and the proclamation of martial law. Before the people—most of them armed with nothing more deadly than walking-sticks and parasols—realised the situation, a frightful detonation of artillery struck down men, women and children, till Lafayette, at his life's peril, spurred his white horse right in front of the cannon's mouth to stop the indiscriminate slaughter. That altar, where, only one short year before, citizens had sworn concord and fraternity, was now stained with blood; some hundreds, at least, of harmless people having perished on the spot.

The Massacre of the Champs de Mars fell like a blight on Madame Roland's heart. She faltered, fell ill, and lost hope for a time. "Mourning and death are within our walls," was her cry. "But let us keep the fire of liberty alive, and transmit it in its purity to a happier generation, if our continued efforts

are not able to ensure its success in our day." In the same spirit she wrote in August, "Fate, by giving us life at the period of new-born liberty, has assigned us the place of the forlorn hope of an army, bound to fight, and prepare its victory. It behoves us to do our task well, and so prepare the happiness of future generations. For the rest, we find our own in such a glorious task. If one must struggle, is it not better to do so for the felicity of a whole nation than on one's own account? What, indeed, is the life of the sage under present conditions but a perpetual struggle with passions and prejudices?"

Numbers of the Republican addresses sent to the Assembly from the country were in reality composed under Madame Roland's inspiration at Paris. She was equally indefatigable in penning stirring missives to the Jacobin societies in the departments—offshoots of the *Société Mère*. How necessary it was to keep the Provinces informed of the current events and opinions in Paris we learn from Arthur Young, who, passing through some of the chief provincial towns at such a crisis, says he might almost as soon have asked for a white elephant as for a newspaper, even at the most frequented cafés.

A *coup d'état* of the Constitutionalists seemed imminent, and the days of the Jacobin Club to be numbered, as a detachment of soldiers, marching through the Rue St. Honoré, threatened to demolish the building, throwing the patriots therein assembled into fear and confusion. So great was the panic that one excitable member of the stronger sex jumped into the ladies' gallery, and was put to shame by Madame Roland, who "obliged him to make his exit after the fashion of his entrance." Soldiers placed to guard the entrance stopped patriots

from entering, although those within were suffered to leave unmolested: fearless on her own account, although full of apprehension for her friends, Madame Roland was one of the last to make her way out.

The arrest of the chiefs of the party being expected from moment to moment, she and her husband went out late on that evening—when all peaceable citizens were only too thankful to be safe within doors—with the intention of offering Robespierre a refuge in their own house. The way to the distant *Marais* was long and dark, the day had been crammed full of horror and danger, yet this noble woman's chief preoccupation was to place Robespierre in security. Arrived in the desolate quarter, they found that Robespierre had not returned to his lodging—nor did he ever return to it. After leaving the Club, as he was walking down the noisy Rue St. Honoré, with groups of people hissing, others applauding, someone suddenly seized him by the hand, pulled him into a house, and shut the door after him. This was Duplay, a thriving cabinet-maker, faithfulest of Robespierre's partisans; nor would the notable Madame Duplay, having once secured such a rare guest, suffer him to depart again. In the meantime, Madame Roland, more anxious than ever concerning the fate of her mysteriously-vanished friend, proceeded towards midnight to Buzot's residence, with the intention of persuading him to join the Club of *Feuillans*, so as to be able to warn and assist his friends in case of persecution. The *Feuillans*, who had seceded from the Jacobins, now formed the nucleus of the Moderate Royalist Party, of which the Lameths, Duport and Barnave, "subjugated by the smile of a captive queen," were the latest representatives. Madame Roland, tremulous



with generous excitement, urged Buzot to defend Robespierre at the *Feuillans*, so as to ward off the apprehended Act of Accusation, which she feared the Assembly would ratify without hesitation. Buzot, although he refused to comply with her request, promised to defend Robespierre in the Assembly if necessary.

In spite of the prevalent expectation, the Assembly did not follow up its "one fell blow" with the decisive measures which might have nipped the rapidly-growing influence of the Jacobins, the Cordeliers, and the Fraternal Societies. Instead of closing the clubs, arresting the leaders, suppressing the most violent journals, it deliberated, discussed, delayed, and so lost its final opportunity—for the time of its dissolution was fast approaching. Countless addresses, too, arrived from the country, protesting against the Royalist proclivities of their representatives. One of them, addressed to the Chamber, and brought in person by Bancal des Issarts, was evidently due to the impulse of the woman who possessed the secret of communicating her own fiery energy to her friends. This address, in which the electors of Clermont accused the Deputies of having twice disappointed the hopes of the nation by the adjournment of the elections and deferring the completion of the Constitution, and in which it was further stated that, if a term were not fixed within the fortnight, *steps would be taken, regardless of the Assembly*, was not admitted before the Bar of the Chamber. Bancal had hurried up to Paris with the address, in spite of a dissuasive letter from Madame Roland, who, in the deepest depression at the massacre, had written all was over, and that it was useless for him to come to Paris.

Soon after these distressing events, Roland, having satisfactorily accomplished the mission with which he had been entrusted, left the capital, and his wife could now again cultivate her lettuces and superintend the vintage at the Clos de la Platière. But the fever of the Revolution burned in her veins, the thirst for action consumed her, and, having once taken her share in that stimulating, all-absorbing centre of political action, she bitterly lamented sinking back into the nothingness of provincial life, and never again found repose in the green fields and shady thickets once so dear to her.

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## CHAPTER XI.

## THE ROLAND ADMINISTRATION

THE days of the National Assembly had drawn to a close. Its members, who had come in with the audacity of lions, went out with the meekness of lambs. The sublime moments of the *Jeu de Paume*, and of the 4th of August had already receded into the past. Twenty-eight months of legislative labours accomplished at Revolution speed had more completely used up these men than years of ordinary political activity. From being the vanguard of the popular movement they had fallen into its rear. "You reason like the end of a legislature" had become a proverbial expression of contempt. One of the last acts of the old Assembly—the Constituent as distinguished from its successor, the Legislative—was to disqualify itself by passing a resolution that none of its members were eligible for the next Parliament. This motion, proposed by Robespierre, was calculated, as it proved, to effectually handicap the moderate party, and the new elections showed that the nation wished for a more radical policy.

The Convention of Pilnitz took place in August. The Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, the minor

German potentates, and the emigrant princes, were concocting measures against the French people, who, since the King's unsuccessful flight, had kept him in semi-durance at the Tuileries. However, since the completion of the Constitution and its acceptance by Louis XVI., there was a fresh upflickering of royalty; but the conspiracies with the foreigner, the bribery, or attempted bribery, of public men, were never given up for long. "Louis XVI.," says Madame Roland, "was always vacillating between the fear of irritating his subjects, his wish to please them, and his incapacity of governing them . . . always, on the one hand, proclaiming the maintenance of what he ordered to be sapped with the other, so that his oblique course and false conduct first excited mistrust and ended by rousing indignation."

The Legislative Assembly met on the 1st October 1791, while the country was distracted by apprehensions of invasion, and by doubt of its ability to meet it. In this crisis of her fate France, as if instinctively, had sent to represent her the men most apt to act with promptitude. In one night the aspect of the Chamber had entirely changed its character. The venerable Constitution-makers had vanished smoke-like into the past. In their stead had come slim figures, clustered locks, eyes flashing infinite hope. So youthful a Senate was never seen before.

Conspicuous among its members was a group of men, sent up from the ardent Gironde, destined to take the lead in the New Assembly. All of them men who had nourished their youth on the literature of Greece and Rome, they entered the arena with little or no practical experience, but with the Republic for watchword. They were the idealists of the Revolution.

The free state which they wished to achieve, that would they achieve "holily"; and while they clamoured for war with the foreign foe they deprecated violence at home.

When Madame Roland returned to Paris in the December of 1791, the affinity between her and the new party made her at once the centre of that group of men known as "The Gironde." It seemed as if from their childhood these kindred natures had been converging to this hour of meeting.

With armies ominously collecting on her frontiers, a spirit of defiant heroism entered the heart of France. The representatives she had elected to man the vessel of State were the expression of this spirit. The indefatigable Brissot was chosen as its captain by this gallant crew, chief among whom may be mentioned the headstrong Guadet, as impetuous as Gensonné was deliberate in counsel; Isnard, the Provençal, consumed by a fanaticism he communicated to his hearers; Vergniaud, winged of speech, stamping the topics of the time with the seal of eternity; the silent Grangeneuve, capable of performing a great action without suspecting its greatness; Louvet, ever first to the attack, as dauntless in spirit as delicate in frame; Barbaroux, the resolute young Marseillais, "with the head of Antinous and the heart of a lion"; Pétion, too, and the high-souled Buzot, both tried supporters of the popular cause; not to forget those two figures of an ideal purity and sweetness—Fonfrède and Ducos, the Nisus and Eurymachus of the Revolution. Of this young hopeful crew the grave, reverend Roland, he of whom Lavater had said that he "reconciled him to Frenchmen," was presently to assume the pilotage. But high on the poop above, beautiful, like the impersonation of liberty, stands the

heroine of the Gironde, exhorting and stimulating, while the ever-increasing storm lashes the sea, and the wind whistling in the shrouds and rigging foretells a perilous passage. Will they steer the ship safely through the breakers and whirlpools, those fearless men, singing their "*Allons enfants*," or will they and that fair woman who is their inspiration founder pitifully in the convulsed elements of the Revolution?

The last months of the year 1791 were crowded with incident. The Assembly, in very self-defence, passed the decree against the emigrant *noblesse* and the Princes of the Blood, declaring that, unless they returned by the 1st of January 1792, their property should be confiscated and themselves declared traitors to their country. The question had also been mooted and supported of passing a law to stop emigration; but Brissot, with his unflinching love of liberty, had successfully opposed the motion. The decree against the priests, enforcing the civil oath, on penalty of sequestration of stipend and expulsion from the State Church—a measure of far more questionable wisdom—was passed in December 1791. To mix up the social and economic changes with religious ones was dangerously to complicate the situation.

The stumbling-blocks of the Revolution—its deadliest opponents, in fact—were not the King with his veto, nor yet the truculent aristocrats petitioning for invasion, but the priests and the women; so true is it that no great outward transformation can be effectively achieved without a previous inward and spiritual transformation, in which the female part of the population must take an incalculable share. Now, although the women of the upper and upper middle classes were deeply penetrated by the ideas of the eighteenth

century, and had consequently flung themselves into the movement with an emotional impulse that had gone far to accelerate it, the women of the people, except in Paris and some other large centres, where hunger spurred them into insurrection, were wedded to their Church. Here, in fact, lay the real, insuperable difficulty, and the fierce animosities of a semi-religious warfare began to envenom the deadly strife.

The responsibility of the decrees against the emigrants and non-juring priests rests mainly with the Girondins. Their next decisive step was to preach war; not a prudent, self-defensive war, but war on a grander scale than the world had yet known, a crusade for Liberty throughout Europe. And Vergniaud, that storm-bird of the Revolution, who continually rose above the rage of temporal contests to some serene ether of thought, lifted up all hearts in the Assembly as he cried in that richly cadenced voice of his: "A thought rises within me. The shades of the generations of the past seem to come crowding to this your temple, and to conjure you, in the name of the evils they endured from slavery, to deliver from them the unborn generations whose fate is in your hands. Grant this prayer: be the Providence of the future: enter into a covenant with that eternal justice now protecting us."

These solemn words converted the Chamber into a temple. But, unanimous as was the cry for war, one man held out against it, the inflexible Robespierre, who urged, with statesman-like sagacity, that the nation should get rid of its internal foes before attacking the foreigner. The first decisive difference in opinion between him and Brissot broke out on this occasion, for the latter, reposing infinite faith in the new doctrine, was less distrustful of the coadjutors

who, for private reasons of their own, might be willing to join hands with him.

At this critical juncture of affairs another illustrious woman exercised a decisive influence on the march of events. Madame de Staël, then but twenty-five, had become the rallying-point of the Constitutionalists, as was Madame Roland of the Gironde. Placed in hostile political camps, they never met, and Madame Roland makes but one allusion, and that a curious one, to the future "Corinne." In a letter from Lyons, dating back as far as November 1789, she says: "Report spreads all kinds of stories about Madame de Staal (*sic*), who is said to be regularly present at the Assembly, and to send little billets from the gallery to her devoted cavaliers, in order to encourage their support of patriotic measures. The Spanish ambassador, it is said, has gravely reproached her for it at her father's table. You cannot imagine what importance the Aristocrats attach to these absurdities, hatched, no doubt, in their own brains; but they would fain depict the Assembly as led by a few feather-brained youths, egged on by a dozen of women or so." Madame de Staël, either from feminine jealousy, or possibly acquainted with Madame Roland's stinging attacks on M. Necker, her father (of whom she had said, among other things, that he was for ever speaking of his character, without rhyme or reason, as women of gallantry do of their virtue), in her description of the Girondin group, never even alludes to the woman who was its inspiration.

Narbonne, made Minister of War by the influence of Madame de Staël, fell in with the popular war-cry, in the hope of re-establishing the King's authority on a firm Constitutional basis. The Court party.



proper, however, had no genuine desire for war, as the risks outweighed the advantages. Events eventually justified the fears of the Court, and Brissot's sanguine faith in French arms and the cause of the Revolution, more than they did the cautious apprehensions of Robespierre.

. At this period Brissot was not only all-powerful in the Assembly; his direct or indirect influence pervaded all its committees, and, on the break-up of the Narbonne Administration, he imposed a Ministry of his own on the Government. He had now reached the height of his influence, and, while bestowing place and power on those whom similarity of political views had made his friends, he himself, poorer than Robespierre, went about in a shabby old out-at-elbows coat, while his wife in person used to iron out his three shirts on some sixth floor of a lodging. In the teeth of this Spartan disinterestedness, his opponents did not blush afterwards to accuse Brissot of intrigue and place-hunting!

As the members of the Executive were excluded from the Chamber in which the ruling power actually resided, the leader of the Girondins, averse from crippling his own influence or that of the chief members of his party, looked out for men not yet practically involved in politics, while qualified by previous experience for public life. His choice fell upon Roland de la Platière, as Minister of the Interior. It seemed a happy idea, seeing that for the last thirty-five years of his life the latter had not only been professionally led to comprehend the economic and commercial conditions of his country, but had also studied them with the eye of the philosopher.

On the 23rd of March 1792, Roland entered the

new Ministry, and, to all intents and purposes, his wife entered it with him. On the same evening she for the first time saw one of his colleagues, Dumouriez, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the future hero of the victory at Jemmapes. "This is a man," said she to her husband after their visitor's departure, "who has a vivacious intelligence, a false eye, and of whom, perhaps, we should be more distrustful than of anyone in the world. He has expressed much satisfaction at the patriotic choice with which he was charged, but I should not be astonished if some day he obtained your dismissal from office." Thus, at the first glance, Madame Roland perceived the incongruity between the worldly pliability of Dumouriez and her husband's unbending rigidity of principle. But she was also forced to acknowledge that, if Dumouriez had no character, he had more native capacity and resource than all the other Ministers taken together. Clavière, long esteemed by Brissot for his extensive and intimate acquaintance with the complicated system of Finance, became Minister of that department, and in his case also Madame Roland foresaw possible troubles of another sort. He was upright, no doubt; but then, again, he was too like her husband, whose temper she knew and managed with inimitable tact: she foresaw that, irritable, dogmatic, and tenacious of their views as both were, they would soon disagree. "These two men," she says, "were made to esteem but not love each other, and they have not failed in their vocation." In Degrave she depicts the most ludicrously inadequate Minister of War! How or why placed in that office is not evident. "He was a little man in all respects," she remarks: "Nature had created him gentle and timid, his prejudices made pride obligatory, and his

heart inclined him to amiability. Perplexed as he was to harmonise all this, he became truly null. I seem now to see him strutting, courtier-fashion, on his heels, his head erect on his feeble body, showing the whites of his blue eyes, which he could never keep open after dinner without the aid of two or three cups of coffee; speaking little, as if from reserve, but really because he had nothing to say; lastly, so completely losing his head in the midst of affairs that he had to send in his resignation." The able and conscientious Servan, Madame Roland's own choice, replaced him in office.

Charles V., in his retreat having vainly tried to make several watches keep time, railed at his former folly for wishing to regulate an Empire's course. Madame Roland, called from privacy to take part in public affairs at a most momentous crisis, now discovered with dismay how difficult it was for a small knot of men to act in concert, even when agreed as to principles. She was equally struck by the scarcity of men whose "energy of soul, solidity of judgment, and extensive views," might entitle them to be called great. Although she never abated by a jot her devotion to the cause, we henceforth find a considerable change in her tone, hitherto so glowing, and in her appreciation of the leaders of the Revolution. Seeing so closely the wheels of the political machine, and the actors that worked it, she shuddered at their want of union, and asked herself where was the man of sufficiently commanding political genius to weld together these heterogeneous elements. Her sex precluded her, unfortunately, from taking a share in the actual political struggle; otherwise, with her knowledge of men, her practical sagacity, her singleness of purpose, her magnetic personality, she might herself have be-

come the rallying point of her party, and her potent will would, no doubt, have infused into them a cohesion and a distinctness of aim, for lack of which they ultimately perished. As it was, she could only act indirectly and at second-hand, which naturally weakened the force of her influence. Although she would not have had Roland deviate by an inch from the political principles which they had hitherto entertained; she could have wished him to evince more pliability in unimportant details of business, and greater tact in his intercourse with his colleagues.

But Roland suffered from precisely the same defects which were at the root of so much that was calamitous in the French Revolution. For the men who then came to the forefront of events had not served that apprenticeship to political life—as how should they under a despotic Government?—which would have insensibly prepared them for the complex and difficult art of good government. That very A B C of politics, the daily press, familiar as household words to the meanest drudge in the United States, only came into existence with the French Revolution. Philosophic theories, logical conclusions drawn from abstract reasoning, the speculations of the study, the argumentative rhetoric of the bar, were the equipment with which the prominent members of the Assembly started on their political career. Whereas the subtle involvement of social life is such, that the law of progress seems to be that for every two steps taken in advance there must be made a step backwards, these fanatics of freedom wished to push on at all hazards, even at that of annihilating all resisting human forces.

With Roland the simplicity of Republican manners came upon the Court with a fresh shock. His round

hat, his plain dress, his shoes tied with ribbons, shocked and scandalised the whole tribe of flunkeys. Here, indeed, was Royalty compromised as it never had been before. The Master of the Ceremonies, approaching Dumouriez with a disturbed countenance and frowning brow, said in a low, constrained voice, indicating Roland with a side-glance, "Lord! Sir, no buckles to his shoes!" "Ah! Sir, all is lost!" replied Dumouriez, with a most comical self-possession.

Madame Roland was now installed in the Ministerial residence, magnificently fitted up, in the early days of Louis XVI.'s reign, by M. de Calonne while, like so many others, trying his hand at regulating the finances. To her private use she appropriated only a small cabinet. The only change she made in her life was to restrict her intercourse even more severely than of old, partly to economise time and partly to keep the host of place-seekers at a distance. Twice a week she presided at a Ministerial dinner, to which, besides her husband's colleagues, members of the Assembly and other political friends, to the number of fifteen, were bidden, but at which no lady save herself was present. Lemontey, a distinguished writer, though not a political partisan, describing Madame Roland as she was at this period, says: "Head, eyes, and hair were of remarkable beauty. The freshness and brilliancy of her delicate complexion, added to an air of reserve and candour, gave her a singularly youthful appearance. I did not discover that easy elegance of the Parisian to which she lays claim in her Memoirs, yet she was devoid of awkwardness, because what is simple and natural must also be graceful. On my first seeing her she realised my idea of the little girl of Vevay, who has turned so many heads, the *Julie* of

Rousseau. . . Madame Roland spoke well—too well. The listener would fain have discovered signs of preparation in her speech, but could not. Hers was simply too perfect a nature. Wit, reason, common-sense, and sweetness flowed with spontaneous felicity of diction from between ivory teeth and rosy lips: there was nothing for it but to resign yourself . . . At the beginning of her husband's ministry I saw Madame Roland for the last time. She had lost nothing of her freshness, youthfulness, or simplicity. Roland looked like a Quaker, for whose daughter she might have passed. Her child capered round her with hair rippling down to her waist. You would have said inhabitants from Pennsylvania transplanted to the *salon* of M. de Calonne. Madame Roland spoke only of public affairs, and I could see that my moderation inspired her with some pity. Her soul was wrought up, but her heart remained gentle and inoffensive. Although the wreck of monarchy had not yet occurred, she did not disguise from herself that signs of anarchy were beginning to show themselves, and she promised to oppose them unto death."

Although the power of the executive in reality rested not so much in the Ministry as in the Representative Assembly, the conscientious Roland was prepared to fulfil his duties to the utmost. The good-nature and apparent sincerity of the King had charmed him at first, and he had come home from the Cabinet meetings full of hope concerning the future working of the Constitution, seeing the excellent hitherto misunderstood intentions of the monarch. His wife was not so easily duped, and warned him not to be too credulous. Her misgivings proved only too well founded, for, in spite of his protestations of

devotion, Louis XVI.'s policy consisted mainly in putting a stop to all active measures of government. Thus he cunningly evaded sanctioning two decrees of the utmost importance to the State: one against the recalcitrant priests, now fomenting civil war in the provinces; the other—war having been declared against Austria—that of the formation of a federate camp of twenty thousand men to protect Paris, on the one hand exposed to the foreign foe by its proximity to the frontier, and on the other, to the foe within, in that suspicious guard of picked men which had gradually been formed in the Tuileries.

The idea of this camp had originated with Madame Roland. Convinced of the King's duplicity and its attendant dangers, she had persuaded Roland that a patriotic Ministry should either make an effort to save the country or retire from office. With more than her usual promptitude, she wrote off a letter destined to be sent to Louis XVI. in the name of the Council. None of the Ministers being prepared to take so bold a step, Roland sent it in his own name. A lesson and an exhortation in one, it implored the Sovereign not to rouse the suspicion of the nation by constantly betraying his suspicion of it, but to secure his country's love by adopting in all sincerity the measures fitted to ensure the welfare and safety of the State. The Declaration of Rights, he was told, had become a political Gospel, and the French Constitution a religion, for which the people were prepared to perish.

The only effect of this letter was to bring about the fall of the Ministers, with the exception of Dumouriez, who had secret leanings to the Court. Servan was the first to get his dismissal. Entering Madame Roland's room with a radiant face, he said,

"Congratulate me: I have been turned off." "I am much nettled," replied the lady, "that you should be the first to enjoy this honour; but I hope that it will be conferred on my husband without delay." Her hopes were not disappointed; and her advice, when he brought her the news, was that he should be the first to let the Legislative Assembly know of his dismissal by sending it a copy of his letter to the King.

The Girondin Ministers now became the popular idols of the hour. There were many signs abroad that the Court wished to strike some decisive blow. The Moderates and the Constitutionals seemed on the point of uniting with the Ultra-Royalists; and General Lafayette, from his camp, wrote a threatening letter to the Assembly, justifying the King's veto, and exhorting it to respect royalty. The immediate result of these ominous movements was the insurrection of the 20th of June, when the Palace of the Tuileries was invaded, as by enchantment, with a tumultuous crowd of *sans culottes* and fish-wives, and which saw the descendant of the Bourbons don the *bonnet rouge*. Cries of "Recall of the Ministers!" "Repeal of the Veto!" were heard at intervals; but, without committing himself to any promise, the King knew how to amuse the people by pinning a cockade to the red cap of liberty, and joining in the shouts of "Long live the Nation!" At last, admonished by the Mayor, the crowd dispersed peaceably enough, and this singular insurrection ended in the Royal apartments being thrown open ~~to~~ the populace to see on its way out!

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## CHAPTER XII.

## DIES IRÆ.

“THE country in danger !” was the cry which electrified France, as crowds of volunteers started from all parts for the frontier. Now, for the first time, the hymn of the Revolution resounded through the realm, as, solemnly singing it, five hundred Marseillais marched towards Paris. But the danger not only came from the foreign enemy, already victorious in several places on the frontier ; it lurked at the very heart of the capital, in a hostile Court, ready to make common cause with the invader. Here lay the paramount cause of the 10th of August, collateral causes being the deposition of Pétion, the beloved Mayor of Paris, and the dismissal of the Girondin Ministry. Madame Roland declares that Roland and herself knew no more concerning the 10th of August—when the Palace of the Kings of France was stormed, and the Royal Family forced to take refuge in the bosom of the National Assembly—~~than~~ did the outside public.

Came the question how to proceed with this poor King, from whom every shred of authority had departed ! Suspension of the executive power, ap-

pointment of a tutor to the Dauphin, removal of the Royal Family to the Luxembourg, were the first measures adopted by the Assembly. But its orders were countermanded, and the Royal Family taken to the dungeon-like tower of the *Temple* instead of to the palace assigned them; while the Swiss troops—who had incurred the deadly hatred of the populace of Paris by firing on and killing them by thousands, in their defence of the Tuileries—were imprisoned in the Abbaye, the most exposed of the prisons. For a new power had mysteriously sprung into existence on that night of the 10th of August—the insurrectionary Commune. Whence its authority—by whom elected—none could say; but, by the occult law of revolutions, the leadership suddenly passed from the Assembly into its hands. One man at that moment was the soul of the Commune, the man who, if any one, had made the 10th of August: the man who could suffer thousands to be massacred, yet weep like a woman over the death of one he loved: the man who summed up his political practice in that famous cry, “We must dare, and again dare, and without end dare!” To name Danton is not so much to speak of a single man as of a whole section of the people. He was great because he represented such a vast mass of the national life; but his greatness was disfigured because this national life itself was turbid and corrupt. If Robespierre might be called the abstract idea of the Revolution, its will was Danton, just as Marat seems to have been its avenging demon.

No man of the Revolution inspired Madame Roland with such instinctive antipathy as Danton. Robespierre she admired, before their common party had split into the hostile camps of Gironde and Mountain; Marat,

whom she had never seen, she long held to be a kind of myth or popular scarecrow; but Danton was a solid fact, thrown much into her presence, and whom she was obliged to reckon with. "I never," says she, "beheld so repulsive and atrocious a countenance; and, although I argued that I knew nothing against him, and that the most honest men necessarily have two kinds of reputation when party strife runs high—in fact, that we should not go by appearances—I could not reconcile that face with a well-meaning man. I never saw anything so characteristic of brutal passions, of the most astounding daring, half-veiled under an assumption of jovial good-nature."

This Commune—destined to take so leading and sanguinary a part in the subsequent events of the Revolution—counted among its members the fierce and fickle Tallien, the medical student Chaumette, a vampire-like creature who seemed to batten on blood, and Hébert, destined to infamous notoriety as the Père Duchesne. A significant addition was made, without any official election whatever, to this ominous corporation, for between the 11th of August and the 2nd of September, Marat stole forth from the holes and cellars where he lay habitually hidden, and took his seat in the Commune. The "friend of the people" emerged into the light to preach the extermination of the great of the land. In Marat—who cultivated hatred as a fine art and celebrated the praise of murder, who even made Robespierre quail with his threats of burning tyrants alive in their palaces, and of impaling senators on their benches in the Assembly—we recognise not so much a man as the dreadful summing up of centuries of wrong. To understand, nay, to absolve this man, who had "made himself Anathema," because hate con-

sumed him like a raging sickness, we must recall those tillers of the soil, worked like galley-slaves on the high-roads, those trembling peasants who ate their daily bread with the terror of criminals, those poor Bretons who considered "hanging as a deliverance from worse evils." We must recall these wrongs here; for the blackest days of the Revolution, the sanguinary days of September, were approaching with giant strides.

Such were the elements of the new Commune before which the National Assembly faded. The country, however, was once more appealed to, and this time without the distinction of active and passive citizens: which had been an oligarchical device of the Constituent Assembly, whereby the majority of the French nation were excluded from the suffrage, on the ground that those who did not pay a certain minimum in taxes were not entitled to the franchise. Meanwhile, the Girondins, with some modifications in the Cabinet, had been triumphantly recalled to office. Danton became Minister of Justice, the geometrician Monge of the Marine, and Pache (afterwards nicknamed "the Tartuffe of Politics" by Roland's wife) was made Minister of War at the recommendation of her husband, who, on taking office, began by renewing the staff in most of the Government offices. Champagneux he made General Secretary, the excellent Bosc Postmaster-General, and placed Lanthenas in the Arts and Science Department. Each Minister had very large secret funds placed at his disposal, employed mostly in issuing papers, circulars, and placards of all kinds, the ~~walls~~ being made the great vehicle of political education. Louvet, author of *Faublas*, became the editor of Roland's paper, the *Sentinel*, most of the political circulars for which were composed by Madame Roland herself. The Minister of the Interior, besides

seeing to the free circulation of provisions, had, in fact, little to do but to publish manifestoes; for such was the universal jealousy of the concentration of power, that the only bodies that possessed any were those who could lay claim to none.

What kind of Government should France now adopt was the question. Madame Roland would fain have seen a Republic inhabited by citizens such as Plutarch had taught her to love. But she forgot the dissimilarity of conditions: that enormous proletariat of France—hungry, violent, ignorant, tumultuous—about to be enfranchised, and to affect directly the future working of political institutions. Her own party, the Girondins, were the only men in the State whose culture would have rendered them fit to realise such a form of Government in its purity; but the foreign invasion, by driving the people into a frenzy of rage and fear, rendered unpopular all measures but those of violence and terror.

Longwy and Verdun had been taken by the Prussians; Paris lay exposed to the enemy; in the very capital a portion of the population secretly rejoiced at these defeats of the French army. A panic of desperation seized the people. They did not tremble for their country alone; they trembled still more for that newly-born liberty, already so dearly purchased. "*Vivre libre ou mourir!*" became the universal cry. The press of volunteers to the public places to inscribe their names on the altar of the country was so enormous that numbers had to be ~~went~~ away. It seemed as though soldiers sprang from the ground, as those armed men were fabled to have done from the dragon's teeth of Cadmus. But the fact of so many patriots departing for the frontier seemed to promise Royalists

a freer field for cabal. In the latter days of August were made numberless arrests of nobles, recalcitrant priests, and citizens of dubious patriotism—as many as five thousand being seized in one night. The Abbaye, St. Pelagie, the Conciergerie, and other prisons—or convents suddenly turned into such—were full to overflowing.

On the 2nd of September 1792 the inhabitants of Paris were wrought up to a fever-heat of excitement. The air was full of farewells to the volunteers departing for the frontiers; the muffled roll of drums filled the air; an enormous black flag waving from the Town Hall seemed to prognosticate destruction and death; the clatter of horses and arms, seized in the nation's name, was heard as they were being taken to the gates; the alarm-bells were pealing; volleys of cannon thundered in quicker and quicker succession; the desperate looks of the people, the sinister rumours afloat—everything foreboded the outbreak of some imminent catastrophe.

Was it the premeditated act of the Commune? Had it been engendered in the monstrous imagination of Marat? Or had Danton—with his famous, "Let my name be branded and my memory perish, if only France be free!"—aimed the first blow? Or, again, did the Paris mob of its own accord turn upon its prisoners, vowing that not a Royalist should survive to triumph, if the enemy entered its walls? Each successive historian of the French Revolution, from Michelet to Lamartine and Louis Blanc, has assigned the hideous responsibility of the September massacres to different sets of men. But there is sometimes a fatal conjunction of circumstances in which distinct causes work darkly towards the same events, and it

seems that, if the prison massacres were unhappily projected by the leaders of the Commune, there was yet no distinct organization or directing Committee, but that the people itself, to judge from the conduct of some of its organized sections—moved by an impulse of rage and despair—turned furiously upon its internal foes, and, breaking all social bonds, constituted itself judge and executioner in one.

The first signal for the horrible crimes about to be committed was the transfer of some twenty-four prisoners, chiefly priests, to the Abbaye, the most crowded of all the prisons. This transfer was significant, when taken in connection with the removal of the gaoler's family, and that of several men, by the orders of Danton, among whom happened to be Desmoulins' schoolmaster. The carriages containing these priests, followed by an escort of Marseillais and other federate troops, were soon surrounded by a hooting, yelling, menacing crowd, to whom a cassock was the symbol of counter-revolution and civil war; and, whether the attack first began on the outside, or was provoked by one of the priests, a spark was enough to blow the passions of the multitude into a destructive blaze.

Then were the prison doors burst open. Half-clad men, armed with pikes, with a strange glare in their savage, hunger-bitten faces, swarmed about the court-yards. Prisoners were at first simply hauled from their cells, dragged along the passages, driven pell-mell into the court-yards, and out down ruthlessly like grass falling beneath the mower's scythe. Some, delirious with fear, flung themselves of their own accord on the weapons of their executioners; others resisted to the death, and fell pierced by successive wounds. To put some kind of limit to these ghastly

butcheries, a kind of infernal Tribunal was at last instituted in a gloomy vault, with self-appointed judge and jury, where Maillard, dread arbiter of September, sat with book and inkstand before him to try culprits, pronounce judgments, acquit a few, and send the mass to destruction. In this carnival of death there were some deeds over which history, in mercy to mankind, should draw the veil, as the cruel murder and dastardly usage of the Princess de Lamballe, whose head, severed from the body, was stuck on a pike and paraded by a wretch through the streets of Paris, and in front of the *Temple* itself, before the sickened eyes of Louis XVI. There were also deeds of devotion and filial heroism such as humanise these otherwise demoniacal proceedings. Thus Mademoiselle de Sombreuil saved her father's life by enfolding him in her arms and making her body a rampart for him; she even disarmed the murderers by her courage, beauty, and despair. But, not content with the actual horrors of the scene, historians have not scrupled to add to them, and the story that the unhappy girl was forced to drink a tumbler of blood to redeem her father is proved to have grown out of the fact that, on having fainted, one of the ferocious band hurried to bring a glass of water, into which, as she took it, there fell a drop of blood from his sanguinary hand.

These "bacchanals of blood" lasted from three to four days and nights. Prison after prison was invaded and emptied of its human contents; the appetite seemed to grow with what it fed upon; the massacres became more indiscriminate as they proceeded. And was there no power in Paris to arrest this defilement of the cause of freedom? Alas! the power in whose hands the real authority, and not its



shadow, was vested—the Commune and the armed sections commanded by Santerre the Brewer—took no steps to stop the massacres. This fact, among other indications, seems a proof that they originated and abetted them. And where, it may be asked, was Roland, the Minister of the Interior, all this time?

On Sunday, the 2nd of September, Madame Roland tells us, towards five o'clock in the afternoon—about the time when the prisons were invested—she was alone at home, when the Ministerial residence was surrounded by about two hundred men, loudly calling for the Minister and for arms. On their refusing to go, after having been vainly assured that Roland was not in, the brave woman sent some of the protesting servants to ask ten of the number to come and speak to her. Her calmness, her beauty, her high intrepidity, must have produced something like awe in those rough *sans-culottes*, who usually eyed with suspicion every person less tattered than themselves. Quietly inquiring on what errand they had come, and being told that they were citizens going to Verdun, who wanted arms, she pointed out to them that the Minister of War, and not of the Interior, was the person to whom they should have addressed themselves. They had been there already, muttered they; these Ministers were —— traitors! They demanded to see Roland. Matters wore a suspicious look, when one remembers the date; but Madame Roland, keeping her superb self-possession, proposed to take them over the place herself, adding further that, if they had to make complaints, it was to the Commune they should be addressed, or that, if they wished to see Roland, he was to be found at a Cabinet Meeting held at the Hotel de la Marine. Thereupon they retired. Madame

Roland, stepping on to a balcony, saw a furious demagogue, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up above the elbow, brandishing a sword, and declaiming against the treachery of the Ministers. After some more parley, the mob retired to the beating of drums, taking one of the valets as a hostage.

Some days afterwards, Madame Roland learned that Danton had gone to Pétion, and in his brusque way cried, "Do you know what they have done now? Made out an order of arrest against Roland!" "Who has?" demanded Pétion. "Oh, that committee of *enragés*. I have taken the order; here it is. We cannot allow them to act thus! The devil! Against a Member of the Council, too!" Pétion took the order, read it, and, giving it back to him with a smile, said, "Let be; it will produce a good effect." "Produce a good effect!" said Danton, curiously examining the Mayor. "No; I cannot allow it."

Madame Roland very naturally connects the two hundred *sans-culottes* with the order of arrest, which she considers was only rendered abortive by Roland's absence from home. Subsequent events seem to justify her supposition. But in her antipathy to Danton she suspects him of complicity, whereas his conduct proves, on the contrary, that he would have wished the Girondins for allies, if they would have suffered him to carry on the Revolution after his own method; but this their humanity revolted from.

This order of arrest against Roland; the two emissaries of the Commune nominally appointed to protect Pétion's precious person, but in reality to mount sentinel over him; the powerlessness of the Members of the Assembly, who had no armed force at their beck and call; Madame Roland's remark to Bancal

on the 5th, "We are under the knife of Robespierre and Marat"—all this helps to explain the else inexplicable quiescence of the Minister of the Interior.

But a change had come over the face of the Revolution. The massacres, it may be said, were in substance not nearly as bad as the atrocities over and over again committed, as history records. But atrocities committed in the name of liberty and fraternity—there is the pity of it! By them, declares the humane Michelet, the cause of freedom in Europe was retarded for a century. And well may it be so! For all the best minds began to lose faith in this uprising of the French nation, which they had hailed as the dawning of a new era. With the rivers of blood spilt so ruthlessly they sullied the pure, new-born idea of equality; with the red glare of their terror they blotted out the clear sunrise that had promised a better day. "You know my enthusiasm for the Revolution," was Madame Roland's cry to Bancal. "Well, I am ashamed of it! Scoundrels have defiled it! It is become hideous! . . . To remain in power is degrading, yet we are not allowed to leave Paris . . ."

Already, on the 11th of September, Roland wished to send in his resignation. "But," said his wife, "Brissot has been scolding me terribly, and declaring that for my husband to quit the Administration at such a juncture would prove a public calamity."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE REPUBLIC.

THE first year of the Republic commenced on the 21st of September 1792, after the Convention had replaced the Legislative Assembly. In the course of a few months its sittings were to be held in the Palace of the Kings of France, re-christened Palace of the Nation. The Men of the Mountain, the "Frogs of the Plain" (as the moderate party was nick-named), and the eloquent Gironde, were closely confronted in the royal theatre; and from the galleries, whence of yore great seigneurs and high-born beauties had looked on, there now rang the applause or threats of savage *sans-culottes*.

The Republic had been ushered in by the first triumph of the French arms. Dumouriez had been victorious at Valmy; Custine occupied Spire, Trèves, and Mayence; the over-boastful Duke of Brunswick, instead of handing Paris over to military execution, quietly evacuated French territory. The signal heroism of its untried volunteers restored to France some of the lustre which the prison massacres had obscured.

These massacres had opened an abyss between the leaders of the Gironde and the three great revolu-

tionary chiefs, Danton, Marat, Robespierre. The last, as often before, had kept personally aloof from a movement which he may have deplored, but of which he was now appropriating the advantages. The Girondins, so far from imitating this crafty, or statesman-like, policy, raised the hue and cry against the Septemberers. Madame Roland, who in her girlhood had endured an agony of pity at the racking of two criminals, now suffered tortures at this desecration which liberty had undergone. Burning with indignation, she exhorted her husband to protest against these "abominable crimes," to appeal to the Assembly to put a stop to further repetitions, and clear himself of the dishonour of tolerating them by his silence, should it be at the risk of himself being struck by the dagger of assassins. Already, on the 3rd of September, Roland addressed a remonstrance to the Assembly, couched in terms which seem very mild compared to the searing denunciations in his wife's Memoirs. Yet this address was everywhere applauded as a miracle of courage. Too conclusive proof that Terror, like the Sword of Damocles, was already suspended above the heads of the Parisians, and that, for fear of being suspected of Moderatism, the population was satisfied to let the most violent take the lead. Roland's letter had been hailed with delight by the Assembly, who ordered its publication and dissemination in the provinces.

Proclamations and addresses were of little avail, however, unless they could be reinforced by decisive measures. These decisive measures, for which the executive had no force at command, Roland had not the daring to take. One way, and one only, remained open, by which the Ministry could still have

seized the reins of government: the one which Danton pointed out to Madame Roland through Fabre D'Eglantine, his mouth-piece. Institute a dictatorship, to be vested in the hands of the Executive Council, and exercised by its president: a measure foreshadowing the subsequent dictatorship of Robespierre, Saint Just, and Couthon. The proposition was received in mute disdain by Madame Roland, as were the many other advances made from time to time by this Hercules of the Tribunes.

She shrank from this man—whom she pictured as a “Sardanapalus, dagger in hand”—with uncontrollable loathing. Between these two natures there was radical antagonism of nature. The woman—type of the Republic such as poets have dreamed her—possessed all the virtues and talents that adorn life, possessed, above all, a profound humanity, shown throughout life, and which did not forsake her at the foot of the scaffold itself. The man—embodiment of the elemental force of the Revolution, and, like it, a compound of horrors and sublimities—if guilty of brutal and violent deeds, had yet that signal merit of thoroughly grasping the peril of the situation, and of being ready to sacrifice all personal considerations for the cause he had at heart.

If ever in her life Madame Roland was greatly at fault, she was so in her persistent repulse of Danton. Considering the tremendous issues at stake and the critical position of France, she would not only have shown far greater political sagacity, but have proved more humane in the long run, to have let the dead bury their dead, and to have averted the greater terrors to come by a truce with Danton. The Gironde, with Danton for its ally, might have tri-

umphantly carried out its programme, and so have saved the Republic. The Gironde, with Danton for its adversary, was helplessly given over to the Hébertists and to Robespierre, and its fall ultimately entailed that of the Republic. But Madame Roland knew not how to make a compromise with evil.

After the massacres of September, Roland's wife succeeded in inspiring the whole party with her hatred of Danton. Her voice urged them to the attack, and whenever they slackened in their zeal, one man, over whom she possessed illimitable influence, the proud, intrepid Buzot, renewed the onset in the Convention.

The Girondins had been universally returned by the provinces. Paris manifested its bias by electing Danton, Robespierre, Collot-d'Herbois, Billaud-Varenne, and one of the main instigators of the September massacres, Marat. Parties at this time seemed pretty equally balanced in the Chamber; if anything, the Gironde had the majority. Their members sat on all the Committees, and Pétion the Mayor was their close ally. They had now arrived at that point, reached by every revolutionary party in turn, when they would fain have piloted the vessel of State into harbour. Their aim became to consolidate the Republic by evolving the reign of law from the chaos of anarchy. The Revolution had been a violent transition from an old order of things to a new one, and, its main objects being attained, they deemed the time ripe for a reorganization of the government in more peaceable fashion. With this object they drew up an Appeal to the Convention to recommend the prosecution of the instigators of the September massacres, setting forth that their principal objects were to dissolve the Commune, to decree in due form the election of a new

Municipality, and to reorganize the National Guards, whose Commander-General was henceforth to be elected by the united sections. All these measures were advocated by Madame Roland ; but, in order to succeed, a threatening obstacle had to be surmounted : the triple revolutionary power—Danton, Marat, Robespierre.

But lack of courage was not the failure of the Girondins. Insufficiently prepared with proofs for so momentous a proceeding, they now impeached the three formidable Montagnards of aspiring to the Dictatorship, and sought to make them responsible for the murderous work in the prisons. The most important of these accusations was that against Robespierre by Louvet. The prophetic spirit of the Gironde instinctively knew its future destroyer, but, in default of conclusive proofs, could not hope to shake his enormous popularity. Robespierre, in a profoundly-considered discourse, wherein he sketched the whole progress of the Revolution, turned his defence into a victory. Outside the Chamber indignant crowds clamoured for their favourites. The failure of the indictment meant the fall of the Girondins.

Their efforts to obtain a provincial guard to protect the Convention was another cause of their growing unpopularity in Paris. After events completely justified the wisdom of this demand. In the absence of a properly-constituted government, with a Commune arrogating to itself all practical functions of one, and a National Guard whose commander was appointed by the most violent party of the moment, the Convention was left entirely at the mercy of the most turbulent faction of the population of Paris. The moment a mob, using its "*sacred right of insurrection*," chose to



invest and threaten the representatives of the nation, what resistance could they offer?

Robespierre, by attacking this demand for a provincial guard, enhanced his own popularity, while the accusation of federalism began to be urged with increased plausibility against the Gironde. In the meanwhile, there came a respite to these unfortunate dissensions of patriots on the arrival in Paris of the victorious General Dumouriez. All parties vied with each other in welcoming him. With the object of bringing about a reconciliation between Danton and Madame Roland, Dumouriez came to dine with the latter, and, with some embarrassment, presented her with a magnificent bouquet of oleander. She replied with a neatly-turned speech, and the numerous guests looked upon the little incident as of good augury. Vergniaud alone was not touched by the hope and joy of the moment, did not share the general delight at the realisation of their ardently-desired Republic. With his veiled look turned inwards, he sat silently brooding, and, seeing the radiant hostess drop some petals from the nosegay into her wine, he remarked half-aloud to Barbaroux, "Not flowers but cypress-leaves should we drop into our glasses to-night. In drinking to the Republic, whose cradle has been dipped in the blood of September, who knows but that we are drinking to our own death? Never mind; if this were my blood, I would still drain it to liberty and equality." No guest but he, the poet-politician, saw the inexorable shadow in the festively-lighted room which rang to the cries of "Long live the Republic!"

So bright a scene this of the 14th of October 1793, Roland's wife presiding, brilliant with beauty and eloquence to-night, with her hair as usual flowing in dark,

abundant locks almost down to her girdle, worn *à la Romaine*, knotted on one side, over what was then called a republican gown, whose white, graceful folds fitted the shape closely from head to foot, a dress "altogether ravishing in taste." Beside her sat the successful Dumouriez, gallant and insinuating in manner, and the slight, insignificant-looking Louvet—fit in turn, says Madame Roland, "to make Catiline tremble in the Senate or to dine with the Graces"—who kept up that flow of wit and sparkling repartee which rarely forsake the sociable Frenchman. There, too, in a blue coat with high turn-down collar, a red waistcoat with wide lapels, and shirt-frill of fine muslin, his hair carefully dressed and powdered (though powder had gone out as aristocratic), was the sad, high-souled Buzot, suffering his glances to linger too long on those dark, expressive eyes of his hostess—glances whose perilous sweetness came with the shock of a revelation. Beside him the austere Roland, with his careless dress and rasping voice, looked still older than he was. There, too, among others, were the humane Brissot, and Barbaroux, with his Antinous-like head. Oh, gifted, high-minded group, so full of hope and aspiration, make merry to-night! let your glasses clink; celebrate the Republic. But a short year hence, when the leaves are falling again, and where will you be? Scattered yourselves, like the leaves of autumn, in lonely places, battling with the midnight storm, hiding in wells and caverns, or shut up in prison till the hour of execution shall strike! She, too, this noble hostess, will be daily awaiting her death-warrant, and will then confess—what otherwise might have gone to the grave with her—that she, too, came to know that "terrible passion," so long delayed.

in her life, which at last seized upon her as with the accumulated force of years. In the clash and clang of the Revolution, when all the faculties were stimulated to the utmost, was born this bitter-sweet love, "heavy as remorse," inevitable as fate.

Madame Roland first met Buzot in 1791, and, after her return to La Platière, she had maintained a correspondence with both Robespierre and him, but more regularly with the latter. Their relations became more intimate after the meeting of the Convention in the autumn of 1792. In a description of his character, written by her on a circular, closely-folded sheet of paper, and which, cut to the size of Buzot's miniature, was carefully placed between its canvas and exterior cardboard, Madame Roland says, "Nature has endowed him with an affectionate heart, a proud spirit, and a lofty character. . . . A tendency to melancholy was aggravated by griefs of the heart." In his public career he was ever staunch to his principles, for when danger attended the utterance of advanced political opinions, he did so as upfinchingly as Robespierre, and when it became equally dangerous to oppose the violent excesses of the Revolution, he had the daring to do so. Buzot was tall, handsome, and sensitive. By the scrupulous neatness of his dress he was a standing protest against the indecent neglect of appearance then in fashion. To him a Republic, if anything, meant the general lifting of the social standard, not its degradation to the lowest level.

Between these two natures—as, indeed, between all whose love has the inevitableness of fate—there was a "birth-bond." They thrilled with the same aspirations, the same hopes, and the same sorrows. To know each other's thoughts they had no need of

speech. If Madame Roland possessed more originality and genius than Buzot, she gloried in the fearlessness of the man who invariably fought her battles by leading the attack in the Convention.

Doomed passion-flower of love to have bloomed in so stormy a time! Brief gleams of tenderness illuminating the lurid back-ground of Revolution and civil war! Flashes of love to be quenched at the stern voice of duty and self-sacrifice!

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## CHAPTER XIV.

MADAME ROLAND AT THE BAR OF THE  
CONVENTION.

DUMOURIEZ's attempts to bring about a reconciliation between Madame Roland and Danton proved a failure. Knowing that the latter would be in the adjoining box, the general had offered to escort her to the Opera, where a brilliant reception awaited him. Not caring to be seen in public with this gay Lothario of a Dumouriez, she made some excuse, but afterwards decided on going with Vergniaud. About to enter the Ministerial box, she perceived the bulky Danton, Fabre D'Eglantine, and some ladies she thought "of questionable appearance," who, however, it appears, were Danton's wife and her friends. Enough; she retired without being seen by the occupants, whose backs were turned to her. Thus was lost the last chance of healing this unfortunate breach, which, if justified by inherent incompatibility of temperaments, proved so disastrous in its consequences.

Although, for patriotic reasons, Danton was anxious for a conciliation, and entertained a high regard for Roland and much admiration for his wife's genius, he had, after his careless fashion, given the latter a wound

difficult for a woman to forgive. Roland had been elected to the Convention for the Department of the Somme, and his wife urged him to resign his ministerial post, the responsibility of which—without the authority which should have attended it—preyed visibly on his health. But the majority of the Convention, considering his services of the greatest importance—and, indeed, he was indefatigable in attending to the circulation of grain and the due provisioning of Paris—pressed him to remain in office. It was then that Danton exclaimed in his forcible way, “Why not invite Madame Roland to the Ministry, too? Everyone knows that Roland is not alone in office.” The deputies murmured disapprobation, and one of them very sensibly remarked that it could not signify to the country whether Roland had an intelligent wife capable of assisting him with advice, or whether the services he rendered emanated from himself alone. “This petty attack,” he said, “is unworthy of Danton; but I will not imply with him that it is the wife of Roland who rules, for that would be accusing him of incapacity.” There was much applause; and the result was that Roland remained in office.

Nowhere is the great political importance attributed by contemporaries to Madame Roland so decisively shown as here. She had now been pushed to the very forefront of the Revolution, visible to all eyes, a mark for envy, to become the favourite target for the venomous calumnies of Marat and the Père Duchesne. Her co-operation in composing and promulgating the numerous writings by which Roland sought to influence public opinion could not remain unknown. The office of one paper, *l'Esprit Public*, was believed to be under her management, and its articles “due to her

prodigious facility" (as worded in Amar's subsequent indictment). Yet, judging from her previous life, and her own assertions, she had not that last infirmity of noble minds, the thirst for fame, but was impelled to action by zeal for the Revolution, and because, as she admits, there was no part that pleased her so well as to be a kind of human Providence.

When the trial of Louis XVI. was preparing, a strange disclosure, which contributed not a little to excite and envenom opinion, was made to the Minister of the Interior. A locksmith, formerly in the King's confidence, acquainted Roland with the existence of an iron chest containing important State papers. To hurry to the Tuileries, empty the contents of the chest into a napkin, carry them home to his wife and examine them with her, was the Minister's first care. In this step one seems to recognise Madame Roland's impulsiveness, and nothing could have been more imprudent. Instead of calling together a commission legally empowered to make a report on these documents, Roland first carefully looked them over, docketed and affixed his seal to each bundle, and not till then handed them over to the Convention. This arbitrary proceeding cannot be justified, though he may have feared that these papers would be tampered with by unscrupulous Committees, capable of interpolating some documentary evidence to serve their private animosity. Had not some vindictive opponent sought to ruin Brissot by the trifling forgery of one letter in a name resembling his, which would have convicted him of traitorous designs? Although Brissot, conscious of rectitude, always scorned to defend himself against the vile charges which undermined his reputation.

Roland had now given a handle to misconstruction, of which his enemies were not slow to avail themselves. The documents turned out most compromising to the King at this critical juncture, showing, as they did, that he had never entertained serious intentions of conforming to the Constitution; that he was entirely in the hands of fanatic priests, leaders of the Counter-revolution; that he sought to reign ~~by~~ a system of corruption; that the men he hated most were precisely those who would have saved his throne—Necker, Mirabeau, and Lafayette; and that he had secretly negotiated with the Cabinets of Europe for the invasion of France.

Denunciations and libels of Roland became the order of the day. The rabid Chabot announced with a consequential air in the Convention that a certain Viard had discovered a conspiracy of Royalists in England, who counted on saving the King and re-establishing the Monarchy with the assistance of Roland and Fauchet! Shouts and laughter answered him. No one—certainly not Danton nor Robespierre,—believed in the long-winded tale of this unknown Viard, whom the Committee of Surveillance had dragged from obscurity to pit him against a man who, whatever his shortcomings, was the soul of honour. After Roland had been called, and declared that he had never seen or had any relations whatever with the persons with whom he was pretended to be in correspondence, it was deemed advisable that, as her name had been dragged in, Madame Roland should be cited to the bar.

Here, on this circumscribed arena, shaken by such fierce debates, all members turning towards her—Madame Roland might distinguish amid a confused



mass of men the wintry face of Robespierre, Marat, the Angel of Death St. Just, leonine Danton, Condorcet, Brissot, the waspish Guadet, and, above all the others, brave, manly-hearted Buzot, who thrilled at the sight of her, as she entered with that proud, erect bearing of hers, such mingled dignity and sweetness in her expression that the Convention broke into thunders of applause. When the tumult subsided, she explained that Viard, of whom she knew nothing, had obtained an interview with her, under the pretext of giving her an account of what he had seen in London; that, after having let him say his say, she had expressed astonishment at his not communicating such important matters to the Minister instead of herself, who was only on the outskirts of affairs. "Without having too practised an eye," she proceeded, "I concluded that the gentleman was a person who came more to probe our thoughts than for anything else." Her whole speech, necessarily unpremeditated, was so lucid and full of tact that it was followed by prolonged applause, and the honours of the sitting were voted to the Citoyenne Roland. As she passed through the House, her exit was accompanied by continued plaudits; only Marat, inaccessible to admiration, growling dissent.

In the meanwhile, debates concerning the trial of Louis almost exclusively occupied the deputies. Gironde and Mountain were agreed in recognising the King's guilt. His appeal to the foreigner was a crime against the nation, if ever there was one, but as to the judgment to be awarded, opinions were profoundly divided. The Girondins had, from the commencement of their political career, been more decidedly anti-Royalist than the Montagnards. They were the first to

invoke the magic name of the Republic. Penetrated with classic ideas, the death of tyrants was an article of their creed; Aristogiton and Brutus were saints in their eyes. We have seen at what an early stage Madame Roland had cried, "Two heads must fall!" Perhaps, had they then fallen, it might have saved incalculable bloodshed. But the aspect of affairs had entirely changed since then, and this change was instinctively felt by the Gironde.

For, before all, the Girondins were humanitarians, and only politicians and statesmen after. It may have been the cause of their failure; but, if so, it became them better than success. One of Brissot's first acts when in power was the abolition of slavery in St. Domingo, and, if attended with unfortunate results, it shows none the less, among many other things, his zeal for the happiness of man. With such tendencies, the attitude of the Gironde towards a fallen monarch was not what it had been when that monarch was surrounded by all the pomp of royalty. As king, was he not virtually dead already? Why revive him then—why bring him once more prominently before the public, and invest him with a factitious pathos by death? Unanimous in their conviction of his guilt and of the urgency of a trial, they were divided in their votes as to the kind of trial and punishment to be chosen. This lamentable schism which split up their ranks unfortunately broke the backbone of their party.

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## CHAPTER XV.

## STRUGGLE BETWEEN MOUNTAIN AND GIRONDE.

ON the 11th of December 1792, the Prince, whose coronation a few years ago had been hailed as the advent of better times, appeared as a prisoner to be tried at the bar of the Convention. Was it only a few years ago, or had centuries elapsed, since *he*, who now stood there attainted, shorn of crown and titles, wrapped in unbecoming brown overcoat, had lorded it in the glittering halls of Versailles, and been pensively observed in his royal scarlet and gold uniform, amid his fawning courtiers, by an obscure daughter of Paris? To the heir of the proudest race of kings in Europe the total subversion of the old order of things must have had something so stunning in its effects that he might well have questioned his own identity. There must have crept over him a sense of phantasmagoric unreality, which, superadded to temperament, may have helped to produce his singular apathy under such astonishing circumstances.

Was ever in history sterner illustration of the inexorable truth: "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation"! For behind Louis, in Louis himself—more weak than wicked, the people saw—even as Macbeth

did in the magic glass of Hecate—a whole long line of kings, who to the wail of hunger and agony around them had been deaf as the walls of those palaces where, in shameless orgies, were dissipated the revenues of the State: so that in Louis XVI. they beheld, not him alone, but the scapegoat of an entire dynasty.

On the 20th of January 1793, by a considerable majority in the Convention, he was sentenced to death.

What Madame Roland's vote would have been does not appear. Michelet, with his fondness for diving into the recesses of the human heart, would like to know who represented her opinion on this memorable occasion. 'The man she loved, he declares, though no one, according to him, was lofty enough to be her ideal. In Michelet's time the secret of that noble spirit had not been divulged, nor had those heart-moving letters been discovered which cast such a new, pathetic light on her life. But this student of womanhood felt that under the Amazon's breast-plate there throbbed a passion as strong as the nature which curbed it. His conjecture as to Bancal des Issarts was wrong; but, passing in review the men she confided in, he characterises Buzot as the heart of the Gironde. A subtle touch this, the fire and daring with which this man always took the lead in the struggle of parties springing not from his heart only, but from that of the heroine of the Gironde. Buzot voted for the King's death, with the proviso of its ratification by the people.

Already, during the King's trial, the position of the Girondins in Paris had grown full of peril. The Rolands had become the target at which Hébert through his paper, the *Père Duchesne*, daily flung the dirt of his scurrilous vituperations. Marat, to whom every person in power straightway became a traitor, held them up

as objects of fear and suspicion to the mob. He had, in fact, a special subject of grievance against the Minister who refused him a grant of 15,000 francs for his paper *L'Ami du Peuple*. But in spite of the continuous attacks against him in the Paris press and by the Clubs, Roland remained firm to his convictions of freedom of the press and of public meetings, fearing nothing so much as to act despotically in the name of liberty.

How far things had already gone with them at this time is shown by Madame Roland's letter of the 25th December, year first of the Republic.\* She begins:—

The date is not indifferent, for who knows what to-morrow may bring forth? it is on the cards that many worthy people may not see its end. There are dreadful designs afloat against Louis, so as to give occasion to include the Deputies and the Minister of the Interior in the massacre. . . . I have sent my daughter to the country, and settled my little affairs as if for the long journey, and can now calmly await whatever may happen. Our social institutions render life so painful to honest hearts that its loss ceases to be a hardship, and I have so thoroughly familiarised myself with the thought of death that, should the assassins come, I shall go to meet them, persuaded as I am that the only thing in the world likely to arrest their blows is to show an unmoved front. . . . Warnings of intended assassinations come pouring in, for they honour me with their hate, and I know the reason why! During the first fortnight of Roland's Ministry the scoundrel Danton and the hypocritical Fabre were always about us, aping a love of what was good and honest. They saw through me, and, without my ever saying anything to confirm their opinion, concluded that I sometimes wield the pen and these writings of M. R—— have produced some effect; therefore, etc.

Since this Marat has been set to bark at me, and has never left

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\* This letter, which is of great interest, only recently came to light at a sale of autographs, and has hitherto only been published in a French newspaper. It is addressed to the ex-Minister of War, then General Servan

me a minute's peace; I have been pelted with pamphlets. . . . My silence has only increased their rage; I am *Galigai*, *Brinvilliers*, *Voisin*, everything that is most monstrous, and the women of the markets intend treating me like another *Lamballe*.

So I send you my portrait, for I would still wish to leave something of myself to my friends. It pleases me to tell you that, with the exception of my husband, my daughter, and one other person, you are the only friend to whom I am giving it. Nobody knows of its existence, not even the general run of friends.

I cannot imagine what things will come to; but if Paris goes to ruin, the South must save us. . . . Most of our deputies only walk out now armed to the teeth. Numbers of people implore us not to stay at night at the Ministerial residence. How charming is this Parisian liberty! Well! Had you stayed in office we should not have come to this. Had the federate troops been placed under your command, you could, by discipline, have turned them into a respectable sort of support. They might have served instead of the guard, which they have not dared to levy. Pache has done nothing but disgust, annul, and send them away again. If they save us tomorrow, it will be of their own accord, and in disregard of orders.

In truth, I am weary of this world; it is not made for honest folk, and there is some reason for dislodging them from it. Farewell, brave citizen; I esteem and love you with all my heart. I shall write to you in a few days, if the storm has not engulfed us. In case it has, remember my daughter sometimes, and the pleasant plans we had formed! . . .

Things had come to such a pass that now the only question left was when the threatening storm would burst. The two parties—~~but~~ one in their opposition to the Moderates of 1791—were now engaged in such a deadly duel that the trial of Louis (judged really on the 10th of August, and an old story by now) dwindled by comparison into insignificance. And this struggle is so engrossing, because on its issue really depended the fate of the Republic. But had its fate not been decided already from the fact that such a struggle existed? Was there any chance of success when those who united should have faced their common foes, hated each other fully as bitterly as them? They should

have united—yet it lay in the fatality of circumstances that they could not unite any more than will oil and vinegar, however much you may shake them up together. Although their aims were practically the same—for there was no difference in kind between the Republic which Danton wanted and that for which Brissot strove—yet were their methods radically opposed. The Gironde tried to found the new order on law; the Mountain on terror. The Gironde considered that the Revolution had gone far enough, and that the crying need was to inspire the nation with a sense of security; the Mountain held that whole sections must be exterminated before a reorganization could take place. It is the fashion now to praise up the last as the strong party, who knew what they wanted and managed to get it; but, if success is the test of capacity, their twelve months more of rule, or so, does not give them such vast superiority over the Girondins. Had they really managed to establish a permanent government there would be some reason for extolling their superior sagacity; but where was the advantage of their system, seeing that their wholesale executions—if they intimidated for a time—only turned the nation's love into loathing.

It is said that the strong coercive measures which they adopted ensured the splendid triumphs of the French army, whereas they had chiefly suffered reverses during the Girondin ascendancy. But one of the most glorious battles, that of Jemmapes, had been won by Dumouriez, a man appointed by the Gironde, but for whose subsequent treachery it could in no wise be blamed. When one remembers how largely the army of France was composed of raw volunteers, inexperienced if full of enthusiasm, their early reverses

followed by subsequent victories may be explained quite apart from party policy.

In fact, most of the successful measures, such as the formation of some of those powerful committees—to be turned into engines of destruction against their founders—were originated by the Girondins and appropriated by the Jacobins afterwards. Thus the important measure of sending republican commissioners to the camps to control the generals and keep the Convention informed of their spirit had been a proposition of Vergniaud. No single cause contributed more, perhaps, than this measure to the success of the Revolutionary army; yet was the Gironde too short-lived to reap the benefit of this, and its credit redounded to their political persecutors.

But the capital charge, that which ruined the Girondins in public opinion, was the accusation of federalism. The one inexpressible sin in the eyes of the Revolutionists was the sin against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic. But had they entertained such a design? And if so, was it really so culpable? In Madame Roland's letter to Servan her expression "If Paris goes to ruin, the South must save us" sufficed to send her to the guillotine. \*We see from her Memoirs that when the enemy was expected to march upon Paris, the expediency of removing the seat of Representatives to the south-east had been discussed. But these changes were only talked of as expedients in critical moments, not as permanent modifications of the State. The deputies from Bordeaux and Marseilles were credited with a dislike to Paris, and the wish of reducing its influence to the level of that of the provinces; but how about Madame Rolaud, who laughingly called herself a *badaud* (cockney), and who from



dreary Villefranche had turned longing eyes towards Paris, every association of her childhood being inwoven with its streets. Yet she represented the spirit of the Gironde in its entirety more completely than any of its male members.

No doubt the September massacres did for a time set Madame Roland's heart against Paris. In the heat of her indignation she called it a city of cowards! To her belief the massacres had not been the spontaneous act of a population impelled by panic, but the deliberately-planned crime of a band of miscreants. And so she argued that the National Convention should be placed out of reach of the terrorism of Paris—where an insurrectionary commune, with an armed force at its back, practically deprived it of free agency—and pointed to the United States as an example to be followed! And she strenuously advocated the formation of a Departmental Guard as a bulwark to the Representative Assembly.

But these suggestions and provisional schemes have no connection with any plan of parcelling out France into a number of small federate communities; Madame Roland herself owns that whatever might be advanced in favour of such federate republics as Greece, Switzerland and the United States, the actual situation of France—threatened on all sides by invasion—called imperatively for *unity*. Buzot, in a conversation where this was discussed, she says, asserted for argument's sake, that that growing patriotism, which had inspired the whole body of Athenians to take refuge on ships and abandon their city to the enemy, was possible in a small state only whose inhabitants all knew and loved each other like the members of a common family. These remarks, reported and denounced by Anacharsis

Clootz, became one of the chief instruments by which the destruction of the Gironde was eventually brought about.

In fact, there exists no evidence whatever of the Girondins having contemplated the foundation of a federate Republic: on the contrary, they were as deeply convinced of the necessity of its unity as the Jacobins. But supposing that they had contemplated the future possibility of such a form of government, was it for Robespierre to stigmatise such a conception as a crime? Robespierre, according to Louis Blanc, the most thorough-going disciple of Rousseau. Had he then forgotten these sentences in the *Contrat Social*, which he who runs may read?

“Moreover, if a State cannot be restrained within moderate limits, there still remains an expedient: that, namely, of not having a permanent capital, but of shifting the seat of the government from town to town where the representatives of the nation shall meet in turn.

“Let the land be peopled in equal proportions, let the same rights obtain everywhere, and life and plenty be everywhere diffused. By this means your State will become the strongest and most wisely-governed in existence. Remember that the walls of towns are only raised on the dilapidation of villages. For every palace that is building in the capital I seem to see a whole country-side falling into decay.”

If ever there were a strong protest against centralization of government Rousseau made it, yet Robespierre shrank not on mere suspicion and loose reports of such doctrine from sending the Gironde to the guillotine.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

## FLING US INTO THE ABYSS.

ON a freezing day of January took place the execution of Louis XVI. His death, as subsequent events amply proved, did not help to cement the future stability of the Republic. Better to have followed the opinion of Condorcet and many of the Girondins, and have sent him into banishment. You can decapitate a man, but not a principle, and the King dead there will still be the cry of "Long live the King!" The founders of liberty, instead of imitating the methods of despotism, should have left something, as Danton said at a later stage, to the guillotine of opinion. Force begets force, and violence violence: here lies the justification of Marat, Robespierre, Saint Just, Tallien, and the most furious of the Cordeliers. But were this the only law mankind would be revolving in a vicious circle of retribution. The apostles of humanitarian principles should have taken their stand on a higher platform, and have cast a veil over wrongs never to be righted by fresh wrongs in a new direction.

Vergniaud, in replying to Robespierre's denunciation of the Girondins, gave the loftiest interpretation to the principles which his party represented. "We are called Moderates," said he, "and for whose benefit?

If for that of the emigrants, was it not we who voted the enactment of those rigorous measures which justice demanded? . . . . Some men make patriotism consist in tormenting others, in causing the shedding of tears. I desired that men should be rendered happy by it. I did not think that, like those priests and inquisitors who only speak of their God of mercy, at the stake, we should speak of liberty in the midst of dangers and executioners. . . . They believe in consolidating the Revolution by terror; I was fain to see her consolidated by love."

Madame Roland's letter to Servan shows how perilous their position was already by the end of 1792, the first year of the Republic. Champagneux describes the continual harassing anxieties of his friend during these last months of her husband's ministry. Every day brought fresh attacks, and every night warnings of intended assassinations. The leading Girondins constantly sought refuge in the house of friends; Madame Roland alone scorned all precautions. Braver than the bravest, if die she must she would die at her post. Once, at her friends' entreaties, she had almost consented to leave the exposed situation at her official dwelling; and, some disguise being required, she assumed the dress of a peasant woman; but the bystanders objecting to her head-gear as not clumsy enough, she snatched it from her head, flung it away, and declared she would not proceed with this unworthy masquerade. "I am ashamed," cried she, "at the part you wish me to play; I will neither disguise myself nor go hence. If they wish to assassinate me, let it be at my own home. I ought to set this example of firmness, and I will."

From this day till Roland tendered his resignation

his wife never left the house. Prepared for the worst, she always slept with a loaded pistol within reach, not for purposes of attack or defence, but to guard herself from outrages worse than death.

Careless for herself, or, more properly speaking, feeling it her duty to remain, Madame Roland was very anxious to know her daughter in safety. Eudora, now between twelve and thirteen, was a gentle; blue-eyed girl, whose abundant hair fell in fair clusters about her shoulders. She lacked her mother's passionate mental energy, and appeared by contrast of a cold, unimpressible temperament, which made the idea of having to entrust her to others less bitter than it would otherwise have been. The parents decided to send her to Roland's elder brother under the charge of a Mademoiselle Mignot, her instructress. But when it came to the point other counsels prevailed; it was judged even more hazardous to send Eudora to the country than to know her under her mother's protection. The time-serving woman in whom Madame Roland would have reposed so great a trust, and for whose old age she had tried to provide, left as soon as Roland retired from office, to reappear on the trial of his wife, when her deposition against her former mistress served to give a shadow of plausibility to some of the charges in the indictment. Roland resigned his post of Minister of the Interior on the 22nd of January, the day following that of the execution of Louis XVI. No invitations poured in now pressing him to remain in office. Highly as the Gironde valued his services and integrity, its own grim struggle for existence engrossed it completely.

Roland, in fact, had become a source of weakness instead of strength to it. The partisans of the Com-

mune had made him the special mark of their malignity. His persistency in exhorting the municipal officers to render their accounts, in charging them and Danton with peculations, in informing the Convention of the crimes and excesses daily committed by the pilfering of shops, the street-robberies, the expulsion of public functionaries, and the decrees of the Assembly set at naught by the Municipality, had made him at that time the most unpopular man in Paris.

His urgent entreaties that his own accounts should be passed remained unheeded. He himself was taxed with dishonesty in his administration. The most absurd rumours were greedily swallowed: as of his having deposited a large sum of money in a London bank. Much as he wished it, he could not retire to his vineyards, for that would have been regarded as tantamount to a confession of guilt on his part; and yet the examination of the *Compte-Rendu Général*, or general exposition of his administration, was purposely delayed to keep him a fixture in Paris with a Damocles sword suspended above his head. It was a heart-breaking situation.

The ex-Minister's health, never good, was giving way under these trials. The misdeeds he could not prevent, and seemed to sanction as being Minister, had given him a kind of jaundice; he could retain nothing on his stomach: so that to all Madame Roland's other cares anxiety about him was added. Matters were not mended by their retirement into privacy. The modest retirement of the Rue de la Harpe was stigmatised by Marat as the *boudoir* of *la Femme Roland*, where, under the spells of its *Circe*, the Gironde was forging the plots that were to destroy the Republic. The Clubs, more tumultuous than ever, rang again with invectives

against the\*Brissotins, those traitors who had voted for ratification by the nation of the sentence on the King. Roland was only spoken of as King Roland. Camille, the too brilliant Camille, pierced them to the quick in his *Histoire des Brissotins*; but the barbed arrow of his wit rebounded, alas, to cleave his own heart when repentance came too late.

Meanwhile the sittings in the Convention grew daily more riotous. Delegates of the nation were seen rushing madly to the tribune, shaking fists in each other's faces, and even drawing their swords! The two chief revolutionary parties hated each other more fiercely even than Court, Nobles, Priests, Royalists, Moderates! But it is always thus in the history of ideas. The more men's ideas approximate, the more galling their divergencies. Yet these struggles of Jacobin and Girondin were mild compared with the war of extermination which many of the conflicting sects waged with each other some centuries after the Christian era.

While this unhappy conflict raged in the Convention, the fortunes of France were reaching their lowest ebb. The news of the reverses of Dumouriez, of the insurrection of La Vendée, of the disturbances in Calvados, broke like so many heavy seas over the decks of the Republic. The Girondins, who still manned all the chief posts, were held responsible for every disaster. Yet they did not admit the greatness of the peril, being either too culpably engrossed by the strife of factions at Paris, or fearful of another panic, or, what seems likeliest, too convinced of the popularity of the Revolution to make them doubt its stability. From the first Brissot had relied for success on the sympathy of neighbouring populations; and he must also have been aware that, as a large portion of the lands of the

Church and of the emigrant nobles had passed into the hands of small peasant-proprietors, their interests were enlisted in the cause of the Revolution.

Be this as it may, the ferment in the Clubs and sections of Paris exploded on the 10th of March in the abortive insurrection aimed at the Gironde. But it would appear that neither Robespierre, Danton, nor Marat himself had had any share in this anarchical attempt to coerce the national representation. Danton, on the contrary, had sent warnings time after time to the unpopular deputies, although after a last fruitless effort at conciliation he had definitely thrown in his lot with the Jacobins. On the day of this insurrection he had made one of his grand speeches, exhorting the parties to union in face of their common danger. Under the spell of his appeal the shrieking discords resolved themselves for a moment into harmony.

Alas! this harmony, which would have saved the Republic, was of brief duration. The formation of the Revolutionary Tribunal became the subject of fresh controversies. From the vision of this terrible instrument, to be entrusted with unlimited powers to judge and slay, Buzot drew back with a shudder. "They were going to institute a despotism more frightful than anarchy itself," he said; and, although interrupted by violent uproar, he nevertheless continued to render thanks to those who had hitherto deigned to spare his life. . . . "Let them only leave me time enough to clear my memory from dishonour by voting against this tyranny of the Convention! . . . What does it signify whether the tyrant be single or plural? When the public entrusted you with unrestricted powers, it was not that you might usurp its liberty." Vergniaud branded this prospective of trial without jury with the



exclamation : "The Inquisition of State come again, and worse than at Venice." Their remonstrances produced some effect. The tribunal, which was elected by the Convention, came ultimately to consist of a jury, as well as judges and a public accuser. But as the jury had to proclaim their vote openly, exposed to the threats of the galleries and the anger of the mob, they were practically acting under coercion.

With the institution of this tribunal the Revolution enters upon a further stage. Auspicious and beneficent was the beginning of its career ; great the blessing it had already bestowed on the nation ; but distracted by treachery, driven wild by defeat, its promise turned to a menace, the hope which it had brought the world was veiled in terror. Yes, the Terror came in with the Revolutionary Tribunal, planting the guillotine *en permanence* on the Place de la Revolution, stalking spectre-like through the realm where it made converts by fear instead of argument ; cramming the prisons with promiscuous crowds consisting of persons of every shade of opinion ; setting aside individual liberty by breaking into houses at all hours of the night, and bringing death to the Suspects. . But likewise filling the foreign invader with dread ; concentrating and intensifying the action of the people ; giving a new impulse to the energies of France, organizing armies, and stimulating the people to melt down the bells and the bronze saints of their churches to forge arms for the volunteers.

The treason of Dumouriez, who went over to the enemy, after an unsuccessful attempt to march upon Paris, inflicted a dreadful blow on the Girondins. Nothing better occurred to the Montagnards than to make the former responsible for the defection of this general

and to accuse Brissot of complicity, although they themselves, with the exception of Marat, had been loud in their praises of the hero of Jemmapes. The Gironde retaliated furiously by incriminating Danton. A foolhardy proceeding on their part; for the Hercules of the Tribune, putting aside all further thoughts of union and pacification, made a speech of two hours' duration in which he came down upon them with his sledgehammer eloquence. The irreparable breach was now made, and animosities had reached such a pitch that the members of the Convention, with the shortsightedness of fury, annulled their own inviolability. Marat had given the signal by his cry: "Let us strike traitors wherever we may find them."

For the moment the Girondins achieved a ruinous triumph by the impeachment of Marat, who had issued a proclamation to the Departments declaring the Convention to be the seat of a "Cabal sold to the English Court," whereupon the Right and Centre, unanimous in their indignation, voted that he should be brought to trial. But while "the Friend of the People" was placed under merely nominal arrest, having every attention lavished upon him by the municipal officers, twenty-five out of the forty-eight sections of Paris had given in their adhesion to a petition demanding the expulsion from the Chamber of the twenty-two chief Girondins. On the 14th of April a deputation from the Commune, headed by Mayor Pache, came to have the petition read at the Convention. Great care had been taken that, with the exception of the offending members, the purity of the majority should be proclaimed. This was but a sinister mask of moderation fain to hide the imminent peril of such a measure. The generous-hearted Fonfrède, the youngest of the

Girondins, broke the spell of helpless bewilderment that seemed to have fallen on the Assembly. "If modesty were not a duty," he cried, "I should feel hurt at the omission of my name from this list!"

Three-fourths of the Assembly echoing his sentiment, claimed to be included too. The majesty of the common will, as expressed in the representation of the nation, asserted itself on that day for the last time in the Convention.

The petitioners had notified that their demand of proscription of the twenty-two should be sent for ratification to the Departments. Whereupon Fonfrède pointed out that the sovereignty of the people only made itself manifest through the primary Assemblies. This would have been a signal for a dissolution of the Assembly, and the plunging the country into the turmoil of elections at a moment when its very existence and that of the Republic depended upon the most absolute concentration of all its forces.

The moment was one of infinite risk. The Girondins, hated by Paris, which they had attacked with inconsiderate violence, still possessed the majority in the provinces. Their influence, their safety, nay their very existence, lay in having recourse once more to a General Election. But Marseilles and Lyons had become centres of reaction in the south-east, La Vendée had burst into fierce rebellion for Church and King, and in the north and east foreign armies held the fortresses on the frontiers.

The great soul of Vergniaud grasped the situation : saw the strife of parties hurrying France to its ruin : felt that, as they never could unite again, one of them must perish. On this 20th of April the Girondins were still free to choose. Vergniaud chose for them.

"Citizens," he said, "a conflagration will be kindled . . . to burst forth on the convocation of the primary Assemblies. . . . It is a disastrous measure and may end the Convention, the Republic, and liberty. If you have no choice between voting this convocation and yielding us up to our enemies . . . citizens, do not hesitate between a few men and the commonwealth. . . . *Fling us into the abyss, and let the country be saved !*"

"This was more than a noble impulse, it was a great action," says Louis Blanc. The Girondins remained silent. Not one of them protested against the stern verdict of their orator, but accepted their doom at his hands. These were the men accused of conspiring with the enemy, of sowing sedition, of federalist proclivities tending to destroy the unity of the Republic: these men who subscribed as one man to Vergniaud's patriotic cry, "Fling us into the abyss, and let the country be saved !"

The Convention, stirred to its depths, condemned the petition against the Gironde. But it had practically lost its authority. The Commune acted as a rival power which often set its decrees at defiance, and the government practically passed into the hands of the members of Public Safety, that famous Committee of Nine, established on the 6th of April 1793, whose sittings were held in secret, and who for a time became the ruling power in France.

Marat, brought to trial, had been absolved by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Smothered in garlands of fresh flowers, crowned with laurel, he was carried in triumph through the streets, followed by a Sansculotte multitude. Loud resounding shouts and vivas warned the Assembly of his approach. "The Friend of the

People," attended by his formidable escort, once more took his seat at the summit of the Mountain. When he appeared on the tribune his voice was drowned by the plaudits of the galleries. He uttered a few words of thanks; but what endeared his success to him was the prospect of crushing his enemies as he was then crushing a wreath in his hand. Looking towards the Right, he muttered: "I have them now. They too shall have a triumphant progress, but it shall be to the guillotine."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

## LOVE IN A PRISON.

ON the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, Madame Roland had sat at home listening with a thrill of excitement to the now familiar sounds of insurrection. She heard the beating of the *rappel* and the *générale* in the faubourgs; she saw armed men quickly tramping through the streets; the ill-omened tocsin sounded lugubriously. She was still in Paris, although long prepared to leave it. Having returned to private life, she considered herself free to go, and judged that, in case of danger, Roland would be more unencumbered if she and Eudora were out of the way. But, although she had come to this decision for the sake of Roland, of her own health, and "many other good reasons," she did not carry it out with her usual promptitude. Was she quite serious in her wish to go, or were there not still stronger reasons which kept her lingering in Paris? Her passports had also been purposely delayed, for had not she, too, become *suspect*? During this state of suspense she was prostrated by violent spasmodic colic—the only ailment she suffered from—usually brought on by over-excitement.

Able to sit up after a week's illness, she was dis-

turbed at half-past five by a loud knocking, and the entrance of armed men, sent by the Revolutionary Committee to arrest Roland. On his declaration that only violence should force him thence, seeing he did not recognise the legality of their orders, the spokesman went back to the Council-General of the Commune.

No sooner had the men gone than Madame Roland formed a daring plan. She would go herself, 'expose the iniquity of this proceeding, and rouse the Convention to a sense of its duty. So she left her husband in the society of a friend, and, closely veiled, with a black shawl thrown over her morning gown, she hurriedly stepped into a hackney coach and drove full speed to the Place du Carousel. The courtyard of the Tuileries was filled with National Guards; the doors were closed and guarded by sentinels. With the greatest difficulty she obtained entrance to the petitioners' hall, and there paced up and down for over an hour, listening with a beating heart to the dreadful sounds of tumult which from time to time reached her from the Assembly. The final struggle was raging there. All day long deputations had been pouring in, demanding—nay, commanding—the arrest of the Girondin chiefs. Robespierre, denouncing them for the thousandth time, urged on their destruction; Chabot could exult at having "put the rope round their neck."

Whenever the door opened, the heroine of the Gironde, while impatiently awaiting Vergniaud, caught a confused vision of the wild scene within. She burned to be admitted to the bar of the Convention. Strung to the highest pitch of exaltation, she felt a force within herself to sway this turbulent Assembly, to

move their hearts, to save at this, the eleventh hour, those most dear to her.

Vergniaud hurried out at last, but gave her little hope of admittance; even should she obtain a hearing, he told her, no hope was to be placed in the Convention. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "it could do what it pleased, for the majority of Paris only aspire to know how to act!" Warned of the peril she was running herself, she scouted danger, saying that, even if powerless to save Roland, she might at least tell those within some home-truths not useless to the Republic . . . and by her courage set others an example. . . . Vergniaud assured her that a motion of six articles was going to be discussed; that petitioners, deputed by the sections, were waiting at the bar—an age for her to wait! Well, she would go home, see what was happening there, and return immediately, if he would inform their friends of it. . . . Most of them were absent, Vergniaud informed her, for, though brave enough, they were wanting in assiduity. "Too true, unfortunately," she admitted, and left him, to fly to Louvet's house, leave a note for him, and then take a hackney coach home. In her fevered impatience the horses seemed to crawl, impeded, as they were, by detachments of National Guards; so she jumped out again to make her way home on foot.

Roland had already left his house when she reached it. The bearers of the warrant, unable to obtain a hearing at the Council, had left him in peace for that night. His wife, seeing him safely hidden at a friend's house, after informing him of her plans, proceeded once more to the Convention. She found it silent and deserted; the armed force had disappeared, two cannon and a few men being all that remained of it.



"What!" she exclaimed, "on the day of an insurrection, when only two hours before forty thousand men in arms surrounded the Convention, while petitioners threatened its members from the bar, the Assembly is not permanent! Then assuredly it must be subjugated!"

She had no option but to return home again. By this time the streets, though illuminated, were almost deserted. At the Pont Neuf the coach was stopped by the sentry asking "Who goes there?" Some parley there was with him; but she got off at last, and was glad indeed to reach home in safety. As she was ascending the stairs, a man who had slipped through the gate unperceived by the porter accosted her with an inquiry about Citizen Roland. Madame Roland, arrived at last in her room, bathed in perspiration and worn out with fatigue, kissed her sleeping daughter, and was just dashing off a note to her husband when again startled by a loud knocking.

It was near midnight. The tramp of heavy feet resounded on the stairs. The pen remained suspended in her hand as a numerous deputation of the Commune entered her room. They asked for Roland, and, on her replying that he was not in, exclaimed roughly that she must be perfectly aware of his whereabouts. "I know not," she said, "whether your orders authorise you to ask such questions, but I know that nothing can oblige me to answer them."

After a whispered consultation the men withdrew, but the sentinel left at her door and the guard before the house apprised Roland's wife what to expect. She ordered some supper, finished her note, and then, thoroughly exhausted after a day of unprecedented excitement, went to bed, and slept as soundly as if

no dangers encompassed her. She had not been asleep above an hour when a servant roused her to say that gentlemen from the Section wished to speak with her. While she was carefully dressing herself, the maid seemed astonished at her mistress putting on more than a dressing-gown. "It is well to be decent when one is going out, my child," said Madame Roland, calmly. The poor woman looked at her and burst into tears.

"We have come to arrest you," said one of the men on her appearance. After protesting against the illegality of the order, she judged it more prudent to acquiesce than to expose herself to any violent proceedings by a refusal. A Justice of the Peace had arrived, and now affixed seals to every article of furniture, even to the chest of drawers. She begged to be allowed to take out her daughter's clothes, made up a small bundle for herself, and wrote to commend Eudora to the care of a friend, but when the bearer of the warrant asked to see the address, she tore the epistle into shreds for fear of compromising her friend.

In the meanwhile a promiscuous crowd had invaded the premises. The pale reflection of dawn mixing with the candle-light showed sinister faces peering about. The foetid atmosphere, caused by the press of unwashed intruders, forced Madame Roland to throw open a window and inhale the morning air. Her daughter clung sobbing about her. The servants stood round scared and helpless. The loving mother, the kindly mistress, was to be torn from them, dragged to prison; and as she bade them farewell, entreating them to be calm, the tears and lamentations of her household impressed even these officers of the Commune, inured as they were to the most tragic scenes.

"You have people there who love you," said one of the Commissioners.

"I never had any about me who did not," replied Madame Roland, and she followed them down-stairs.

The street was full of people and guarded by armed men. Erect and fearless, the great *Citoyenne* stepped through the crowd, towards the carriage that was to bear her to prison, as proudly as, three short summers ago, she had walked towards the Altar of the Federation. It was seven in the morning of the 1st of June. Women of the markets, glaring and shaking their fists at her, shouted, "To the guillotine!" Some of the Commissioners obligingly offered to pull down the blinds.

"No, gentlemen," she replied; "innocence, however oppressed, should not assume the attitude of guilt. I fear the eyes of no one, and do not even wish to escape from those of my enemies."

"You have much more character than many men," they said. "You can calmly await justice."

"Justice!" cried she. "If it existed I should not now be in your power. I would go to the scaffold as calmly if sent there by iniquitous men. I only fear guilt, and despise injustice and death."

They reached the prison. The heavy gates of the Abbaye closed on her. She crossed that courtyard, those corridors still reeking with bloodshed and haunted by the spectres of September. Over that door might have been inscribed

All hope abandon ye who enter here.

Madame Roland was invulnerable to the shafts of misfortune. Locked into her room, she sat down, covered her face with her hands, and saying, "Well, here I am in prison!" fell into a profound reverie.

There she was, calm as to her own fate, inexpressibly anxious concerning that of her country and her friends, when, on the 2nd of June, the familiar sounds of insurrection reached her in captivity. Marat himself that day sounded the tocsin to call the people to arms; Henriot, the ruffianly commander, was investing the Tuileries, and behold the Convention itself actually a prisoner in Paris!

After a feeble show of resistance, the Right and the Centre, cowed by Henriot's cannon, agreed to the expulsion of the twenty-two Girondins, who, to smooth matters, were only to be put under arrest at home. So fell the Gironde, and it is refreshing to find among the list of the proscribed the heroic name of Ducos, that martyr to friendship, who, when Marat would have saved him because of his extreme youth, scorned his mercy and cast in his lot with Fonfrède, be his fate what it might.

"Things are rarely what they seem," says Madame Roland in her Memoirs, "and the periods of my life that have been the sweetest were the reverse of what outsiders would imagine. Happiness, in fact, belongs to a state of feeling, and not to external circumstances." Circumstances were now at their darkest, but hidden in her heart she had a hive of honey. In reviewing her past life she had nothing with which to reproach herself; she had done her duty valiantly. In the very act of securing her husband's liberty she had sacrificed her own. From the beginning of their union all her faculties had been placed at his service, and, reinforcing his powers with hers, she had practically lifted him into the important position which had now ended in ruin. But in this marriage, "the ascendancy of twenty years' seniority, added to a

domineering temper," had been a heavy burden, which the wife had still borne with uncomplaining fortitude.

She never ceased to honour and esteem "the virtuous Roland"; she was devoted to him as a daughter, she says; but that love which he had never awakened in her, which her powerful organization could not escape, seized hold of her in the stormiest days of the Revolution, to raise as fierce a storm in her heart, and shake the fabric of her life to its foundations. The fiery trial through which she had passed in finding a man who answered to her ideal by the courage, purity, and elevation of his nature, and who, while reciprocating her passion, recognised as fully as she did herself the inviolability of previous ties, this trial had been so terrible that persecution, imprisonment, the scaffold itself, sank by comparison into insignificance. Yes; when once her conjugal bonds had been forcibly wrenched asunder, she welcomed the prison as a deliverance from her invisible captivity, *cherishing the fetters which left her free to love her friend unrestrictedly, and thanking Heaven for having substituted her present chains for those which she had previously borne.* Could any words more forcibly express through what a terrible struggle she had passed? and these words would never have left her lips had she not been shut out from the world, and been writing to Buzot under the shadow of the guillotine.

In reading the letters which the captive woman sent to the proscribed republican, we must never lose sight of the unique situation in which they were penned, nor of the improbability of these lovers ever again meeting, which added a childlike openness to

the tragic intensity of feelings that seemed already to belong to the departed.

In the eyes of many to whom are thus revealed the inmost recesses of Madame Roland's heart, she may seem reprehensible for having allowed a feeling to take root in her heart opposed to that which she owed to her husband. But the Revolution, by loosening the bonds of custom, by stimulating the vital energies, by communicating her volcanic commotions to her children, prepared the soil for those insurrections of the heart and heroisms of love so pathetically interwoven with its political history. Now it is a Danton, who, convulsed beside the grave of his wife—deceased in his absence—has her dug up, and clasps her inanimate corpse in his arms in transports of despair. Now it is a Vergniaud, for whom to stay in Paris is death, and who stays that he may not shorten by an hour his intercourse with Mademoiselle Candaille, the beautiful actress he adores. Now it is a Lucile, fair young wife of Desmoulins, who glides round the prison like his shadow, and, like his shadow, too, follows uncomplainingly to the guillotine.

That whole generation, while the social fabric was yielding and cracking beneath its feet, and while death encompassed it, was consumed by the thirst for life. Into its brief existence it crammed centuries of thought, action, suffering. It was ready to shatter all obstacles that hindered the current of its passions. The indissolubility of the marriage tie had been cancelled. An interval of a few months sufficed between the rupture of the old union and the formation of the new. In this very month of May, 1793, the records of the *Moniteur* prove the cases of divorce to have been one-third in proportion to the marriages. Madame

Roland no more believed in the indissolubility of the conjugal tie than did her contemporaries, and the bond which claimed to keep together two people made incompatible by differences of age, temperament, or sentiments, appeared to her both anomalous and cruel; but she never considered the possibility of applying this reasoning to her own situation. / Her theories never served her as stepping-stones to licence.) The more old foot-holds of custom seemed giving way beneath her, the more frantically she clung to her ideal of Duty, that rock which had hitherto upheld her. When it came to a question of gaining her own happiness or of spoiling the last years of Roland's fretted existence, she never hesitated at the sacrifice. And does not the highest moral worth consist in overcoming temptation rather than in never having been led into it?

The perfect candour of Madame Roland's nature had not suffered her to live in confidential intercourse with another while hiding her thoughts from him. It would have seemed like treason. She had confessed everything, laying her heart bare before Roland. "The knowledge that I am making a sacrifice for him," she says, "has upset his happiness. He suffers in accepting what yet he cannot do without." Roland, if exacting in daily life, could rise to great occasions. He entered magnanimously into his wife's trouble, and there goes a tradition that he had formed a resolution of voluntarily leaving her, should she not succeed in stifling her love; but she would never have consented to this, knowing as she did how closely the fibres of his life were bound up in hers: having so completely fulfilled her maxim—that a woman must make the man's happiness in marriage—that he could not live

without her. Truly there seemed no way of disentangling this moral knot, when the Revolution came and cut it in two by throwing Madame Roland into prison.

A sense of unwonted lull came to her behind the iron bars. The reins had been roughly snatched from her hands, and there was nothing for her to do but let the fatality of events carry her whither they would.\* With her habitual promptitude and love of order, she began arranging her cell, placing a rickety little table near the window ready for writing, and, to avoid disarranging it, having her meals set out on the mantel-piece.† These she tried to limit to what was strictly necessary, although she was free to spend what she liked on herself. The allowance of prisoners had been reduced by Roland from 4s. 2d. to 1s. 8d. a day, but the rise in the price of provisions, tripled within a few months, made this sum inadequate, after the deduction of expenses for bed, &c. Retrenching her wants as far as her health permitted, she took bread and water for breakfast, a plain dish of meat and vegetables for dinner, and a few greens for supper; the sum thus economised she spent on the wretches who were lying upon straw, "that while eating her dry bread in the morning she might feel the satisfaction that the poor reprobates would, owing to her, be able to add something to their dinner."

Books and flowers, whose soothing, uncomplaining companionship had been dear to her from childhood, became the solace of her captivity. Thomson's *Seasons*, a favourite book, had been in her pocket on the night of her imprisonment. She sent for Plutarch, who had made her a republican at eight years of age, and whose *Lives* might help her to bear with fortitude the reverses



of her own ; for Hume's *History of England*, and for Tacitus. To her regret she could not procure Mrs. Macaulay's *History of the English Revolution*, a work at that time greatly admired by French Republicans, and which she would fain have matched by a rival production in her mother tongue.

The rare beauty of Madame Roland's character and her winning manners could not fail to gain the hearts of all who came in contact with her. The gaoler's wife showed her every kindness, made her sit in her own room, where the air was purer, and where she was able to receive friends. Even the turnkeys, some most villainous of appearance, became humanised in her presence. Her faithful friends rallied round her, Bosc assuring her of the safety of her daughter, placed by him under the protection of a worthy, kind-hearted lady, in whose family she remained like one of her own children. To Champagneux, who had always admired her, she had never appeared so great as now "when she gave to the prison the dignity of a throne." The kindly Grandpré, appointed Inspector of Prisons by Roland to obviate some of their grossest abuses, proposed that she should address the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior to protest against an imprisonment for which no cause had been assigned. She readily consented, more to vent her indignation than from any expectation of a favourable result.

Tranquil on her own account, she was racked by cruel anxieties concerning Roland and her proscribed friends, especially the one dearest of all. Roland had fled, and was now sheltered in the house of some ladies who lavished every care and kindness on him. Some of the Girondins were under arrest at their own homes, having remained in pledge of the good faith of

those who had escaped to the provinces, among whom were Barbaroux, Louvet, Pétion, and Buzot. None of the most prominent Girondins had been to the Convention on the 2nd of June : they had, therefore, been able to take flight. But it was only by force that his friends had prevented the determined Buzot from rushing to the tribune, where he would have wished to make his protest and die. He now proceeded to Caen, which became the centre of Girondin agitation.

While Madame Roland, behind her bolts and bars, was striving after an inward calm impervious to calamity, she was rudely disturbed in her meditations by loud cries persistently repeated under her windows. They were those of the newsmonger proclaiming to the people "*La grande colère*, the great rage of the Père Duchesne against that woman Roland imprisoned at the Abbaye, and the discovery of the great conspiracy of the Rolandists, Buzotins, Pétionists, Girondins, in league with the rebels of the Vendée and the agents of England." Obscene language, conveying the foulest abuse, was persistently shouted in the hearing of the captive. Hébert, the vulture of journalism, marked the destined victim, hovering round her in ever-narrowing circles, ready to strike his talons into her heart. These persistent asseverations of the presence of Roland's wife at the Abbaye seemed calculated to incite the mob to a repetition of their September exploits ; but the reprobation with which the Girondins had not ceased to brand them had had its effect. They themselves were destined to benefit by that impulse of humanity. Stung to the quick by the infamy of Hébert's calumnies, Madame Roland wrote to Garat, the Minister of the Interior, with a pen that knew how to stab.

"Garat! to you I report this insult. It is due to your cowardice; and if still worse things should happen, it is on your head I invoke the vengeance of heaven. . . . Yes, I know what events usually follow on those outrageous provocations. What matter? I have long been ready. In any case, accept this farewell which I send to prey on your heart like a vulture."

While still sore from the revolting infamies of the Père Duchesne there came to her the sweetest consolation fate could still vouchsafe, a letter from Buzot. She replied to it on the 22nd of June.\*

"How often have I not read it, pressed it to my heart, covered it with kisses! . . . I felt calm and resolute on coming here, not without hopes for the defenders of liberty; but when I heard the decree of arrest against the Two-and-twenty I cried—My country is lost!—I have suffered tortures till assured of your safety. . . . Continue your noble efforts, my friend; Brutus despaired too soon of his country's safety on the plains of Philippi. As long as a single determined republican is free, he must and can be useful.

"As for me, I shall calmly await the return of justice, or endure the last excesses of tyranny in such a way that my example may not prove useless. What I feared most was that you might take some imprudent steps on my account. My friend, it is by saving France

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\* The four letters written, during her imprisonment, to Buzot, and published for the first time in 1864 by M. Dauban in his *Étude sur Madame Roland*, came to light in November 1863, when they were sold among a bundle of time-yellowed papers—the unpublished *Memoirs of Louvet and Pétion*, a copy of the *Memoirs of Buzot*, a tragedy of *Salles*, *Notes and Memoranda by Barbaroux*. The whole lot went for fifty francs. These letters, penned for one only, written without the faintest thought of the public, illuminate with a fresh light the heart of the noble woman whose last confession they were.

that you can ensure my safety, nor do I care for safety at its cost ; but shall die contentedly if I know that you are of use to your country. Death, sorrow, torments are nothing to me, I can defy them ; believe me, I shall live to my last hour without wasting an instant in ignoble fears. . . .

“ Certain privileges, due to my humane keepers, I am forced to keep secret for fear of compromising them ; but kind actions are more binding than chains, and supposing I could save myself to-morrow, I would not, for fear of ruining the honest gaoler who does his best to soften my captivity. . . . I have my Thomson (dear to me on more accounts than one), Shaftesbury, an English dictionary, Tacitus, and Plutarch ; I lead the same life as in my study at home, at the Ministerial dwelling, or elsewhere. . . . I have prevented R—— from addressing himself to the Convention since the 2nd of June. It is no longer the National Assembly to persons of high principles. I know of no constituted authority now in Paris from which I should care to solicit anything ; I would prefer rotting in my chains to such humiliation. The tyrants may oppress, but degrade me ? never, never ! . . . The unfortunate R—— has been in hiding with several timorous friends within the last twenty days, screened from all eyes—more of a captive than I. I am anxious about the state of his head and health ; he is now in your neighbourhood—ah ! would he were so morally speaking. I hardly dare tell you, what you only will understand, that I was not over sorry at being arrested. They will be less furious, less eager in R——’s pursuit, said I to myself, and should they proceed to a trial I may be able to meet it in a way most creditable to his reputation. It seemed to me I was thus acquitting

myself of a debt due to his sufferings; but do you not see that in being alone it is with you I abide? Thus I sacrifice myself to my husband by a captivity that gives me more to my friend, and I owe it to my persecutors to have reconciled duty and love: do not pity me! . . .

"*Mon ami*, in yours of the 15th I have recognised the manly tone of a proud and independent spirit, occupied with lofty plans, triumphing over fate, capable of generous resolutions and sustained effort. How vividly it called up the feelings which unite us! But how sad is yours of the 19th—how sombre its conclusion! A great matter, forsooth, to know whether a woman will survive you or not! What does matter is to preserve your life so as to be of use to your country; the rest will follow."

The rest will follow! With those few scornful words the prisoner puts aside the consideration of her personal lot, to invite her lover to concern himself solely about that of his country. Here we surprise the most intimate movements of Madame Roland's heart, when she had left the world behind her and was speaking to one only, and that one for ever separated from her. Is it possible for a noble nature to express intenser affection than by rendering thanks to the dungeon for having at last reconciled duty and love? And yet love itself is subordinated to her country, ever first with her.

Was it likely that she or her friends would wish to ruin France by fomenting a civil war? Their mistake really lay in miscalculating the extent of their influence and the spirit of the departments. They had fancied that their first summons would electrify the provinces, rally the country round the Girondins, and

deliver Paris from what they considered the despotism of a small terrorist faction. They argued in their indignation that they would defend the *unity and indivisibility of the Republic* from the encroaching violence of the capital. Buzot, in his Memoirs, gives a succinct statement of the plan they had proposed to themselves. This plan consisted in effecting a junction between the troops of the departments and the inhabitants of Paris; of re-establishing the Convention in its integrity, and of ensuring its liberty of action by a guard to be chosen from all the departments; and to have the members of the Convention tried by judges, to be likewise elected by the departments. This was the extent of Girondin federalism. A proclamation was drawn up at Caen for the purpose of raising a national force. Eight departments of Brittany and Normandy became the centre of the coalition; but in other parts of France, at Bordeaux, Rennes, Limoges, Marseilles, Besançon, Dijon, &c. there were symptoms of insurrection. The Girondins had entrusted their fate to the hands of General Wimpfen, who had served under Dumouriez—an excellent soldier, who put his sword at their disposal. While collecting troops, he issued an address to the Metropolis, proclaiming that his intention was to march towards not against Paris, for the sake of Paris itself and that of the Republic.

However fair-seeming these threats, veiled under an appearance of good intentions, civil war must have inevitably followed them, but for one insuperable obstacle, that of the sincere republicanism of the Girondins. Rage might have blinded them for an instant to the consequences of their proceedings; but they had no sooner clearly realised them than they gave up all thought of fomenting the insurrection. If their

enemies could only be reached by striking at the Revolution first, then let their enemies triumph. Mountain and Gironde equally shrank from the terrible conflict; and the consequence was, that when Puisaye, appointed second in command by General Wimpfen, marched his five or six hundred men, chiefly from the remotest parts of Brittany, towards Vernon, near Evreux, to meet the forces of the Mountain coming from Paris, the combatants had so little confidence in their cause that, without striking a blow, they took to flight, leaving neither wounded nor killed. The Mountain, with generous sagacity, had gone on the tack of treating the insurrection in the Calvados as a pardonable error, born of the intrigues of a few conspirators, and the result was that the inhabitants were only too eager to testify their adhesion to the ruling powers.

Under these distressing circumstances, General Wimpfen dropped the mask of semi-Republicanism with which he had hitherto deluded the Girondins, showed himself under his true Royalist colours, and informed them bluntly that there remained only one means of promptly and effectively attaining their object, that was to open negotiations with England, for which he already possessed the necessary facilities, if they would entrust matters to his hands. The founders of the Republic were horror-stricken. Without consulting with each other, they rose as one man, and broke up the Conference in indignant silence. If they erred in not carrying out to the letter Vergniaud's heroic proposal, they speedily retrieved their error, and so saved France from impending ruin. But they themselves were now effectually ruined; there was no longer any abiding for them in Calvados. The

decree of the Convention, which declared them *Hors la loi*, outlawed, had been placarded on the Intendance Mansion at Caen. Buzot's house at Evreux had been razed to the ground and a gallows erected in its place, with the inscription, "Here dwelt the traitor Buzot." The earth seemed to recede from beneath them. Disguised as soldiers in the ranks of the company of the Breton National Guards returning to their homes, they left Caen behind them.

Some three weeks earlier, on the morning of the 24th of June, the Citoyenne Roland was informed, to her surprise, that she was set at liberty, nothing having been found against her to warrant her detention. She lost no time in collecting her few things, getting into a coach, and driving to her apartments in the Rue de la Harpe. Light as a bird she flew down the step, was joyfully welcomed by the woman of the house, and intended, after leaving a few directions, to hurry to the kind family who had adopted her child, when two men, who had followed at her heels, stopped her on the stairs, crying, "Citoyenne Roland!"

"What do you want?" asked she, looking back.

"We arrest you in the name of the law!"

Had ingenious persecutors laid their heads together to concoct a plan for more effectually tormenting their victim, they could not have devised a more successful one. The door of the cage had hardly been opened—the resignation of the prisoner had hardly given place to a thrill of joy at her freedom, and to the delightful anticipation of again clasping her daughter to her heart—when she was recaptured. In her vivid description of this event Madame Roland herself gives up attempting a description of the disappointment she suffered.



Once more dragged to prison, she did not submit to this second incarceration without a protest addressed to the section of Beaurepaire; its only result being that of leading to the imprisonment and death of the younger Cauchois, son of her landlord, who made some efforts to save her. Taken to Sainte Pélagie this time—a sinister prison, situated in a low, remote quarter of Paris—the great citoyenne was lodged in a narrow cell, only separated by a thin partition from that of assassins and prostitutes, where it was impossible to avoid hearing the foulest language and seeing the most revolting sights, the building where the men were kept facing the wing occupied by the women, who between them kept up a perpetual fire of ribald jokes and indecencies. As she had no option between taking exercise in a filthy room in the company of those miscreants, or of remaining shut up in her cell, she preferred the latter, vainly trying to mitigate the stifling heat of July by wrapping paper and leaves round the bars, glowing with the sun. But her mental suffering rendered her almost oblivious to these trials. The hope of seeing her daughter again, so cruelly foiled, had struck her a heavy blow, and she dared not even indulge in the luxury of sending for her occasionally, lest the girl should attract the attention of the Argus-eyed Hébert and company, and be thrown into prison as the offspring of “conspirators.” Such cases were not unknown, and alarmed her indescribably. Grief overwhelmed her; but only for a moment. In her next letter to Buzot, of the 3rd of July, there is no trace of weakness. She says:—

*My friend, do not let us transgress so far as to strike the bosom of our mother in speaking ill of that virtue which we buy by cruel sacrifices, it is true, but which in turn repays us by such precious*

rewards. . . . Tell me, do you know a greater gain than that of rising superior to adversity and death, and of finding something in your heart capable of sweetening and embellishing existence to its latest breath? Tell me, did anything ever give you this experience more fully than the knowledge of our mutual attachment, in spite of the contradictions of society and the horrors of oppression? . . . I will not gainsay that I am indebted to it for being pleased with captivity. Proud of persecution at a time when virtue and character are proscribed, I would have borne it with dignity, even apart from you; but you endear it to me. The wicked think to crush me with their chains. Madmen! what care I whether I am here or there? Does not my heart go with me everywhere? and is it not in prison that I am free to follow its dictates? . . . From the moment I am alone my duties are restricted to good wishes for what is just and honest, and even so you still claim the first place. Nay, I know too well what would have been my duty in the natural course of things to complain of the violence which has snatched me from it. If I must die . . . well, I know of life the best it contains, while its continuance would probably only exact fresh sacrifices. . . . The moment in which I gloried most in my existence, when I felt most vividly that exaltation of soul which dares all dangers and rejoices in facing them, was the one on which I entered this Bastille to which the executioners have sent me. . . . It seemed to give me an occasion of serving Roland by the firmness with which I could bear witness; and it seemed sweet to be of some use to him, while, at the same time, my seclusion left me more entirely yours. I should like to sacrifice my life to him, that I might have the right of giving my last breath to you alone.

It was no fine-sounding phrase, when the wife of Roland said she would sacrifice her life for him! She had effectually done so! And, though several persons were sent at intervals, both by Roland and Buzot, to help her to escape—a not impracticable scheme, especially from the Abbaye—she persistently refused to avail herself of this chance, partly from fear lest the pursuit of her unhappy husband would be carried on with greater zeal when she could no longer act as scapegoat for him, and partly, as we have seen, not to risk the liberty of the good gaoler who should connive at hers; so she remained, making lighter of

her position than she felt it to be, to allay the anxieties of the proscribed Buzot, to whom she wrote again on the 6th of July :—

Calm yourself, my friend ; this new captivity has not aggravated my state so much that we should risk anything to change it. . . . Fourteen days ago I sent for *this dear picture*,\* which hitherto, by a kind of superstition, I would not place in a prison. But why deny myself this poor and precious consolation in the absence of the original ? It is next to my heart, hidden from all eyes, felt at all moments, and often bathed with my tears. Yes ; I admire your courage, I am honoured by your attachment, and glory in the efforts with which these sentiments may inspire your proud and sensitive soul. . . . Whoever is capable of loving as we do feels within himself the root of all great and good actions, the reward of the heaviest sacrifices, a consolation in all trials. Adieu, my best beloved, adieu !

The last letter she sent to the outlaw was penned on the 7th of July. After that date Buzot lost his last ray of comfort in the cessation of all intercourse with her whose picture he, too, carried next his heart :—

You cannot imagine the charms of a prison, *mon ami*, where we are only responsible to ourselves for what use we make of time ! No tiresome interruptions, no painful sacrifices, no petty cares ; none of those duties all the more imperious because they appeal to our sense of right ; none of those conflicts between the laws or prejudices of society and our dearest impulses ; no jealous looks to watch us and everything we do ; nobody who suffers from one's melancholy or inaction, or who exacts sentiments beyond one's control. Given back to oneself, with no obstacles to overcome, one may honestly give free play to one's thoughts, without injuring the rights or affections of anyone, and thus recover moral independence in the bosom of

\* “ *This dear picture* ” is written in English in the original. It was Buzot's miniature, already spoken of, at the back of which Madame Roland had affixed a closely-written sketch of the original. She had given him hers in return, as may be inferred from the allusion in her letter to Servan. This miniature of Buzot, which she probably carried with her to the scaffold, was discovered, in 1863, amid a heap of vegetables at a greengrocer's stall at Batignolles, and came into the possession of M. Vatel, through whom it was made known to M. Dauban.

captivity. But I would not have allowed myself this kind of independence by disburdening myself of another's happiness which I yet found it so difficult to make. Events have brought about what I could not have achieved myself without a kind of crime. How I cherish the fetters where I am free to love you wholly, and where I may always think of you! . . . Persevere in your generous efforts, serve your country, save liberty; every one of your actions is a delight to me, and your conduct makes my triumph. . . . Oh, you who are as dear as you deserve to be, temper the impatience which torments you; in thinking of my fetters, remember also what I owe to them. . . .

I have cordially approved the resolution of the departments to act only in concert. I know not whether these delays, by giving the enemy so many opportunities for making his preparations, may not prove fatal to the good cause. . . . True, the majority of Parisians would open their arms to their brothers from the departments; they are looking forward to them as deliverers. . . . After so much delay, there should be no partial action; they ought to move in a body now. Their chief aim should be to secure the Post Office, to maintain perfect discipline, to enlighten public opinion by lucid and truthful writings, to attend carefully to the provisions, to the means of defraying the expenses, and their wise regulation. These are the matters to which the deputies should attend, and which require careful consideration. There are nearly always people enough fitted for action, but only a few able to lead. . . .

It seems to me that, even independently of the general interest, every department requires the preservation of unity; for, under the false pretence that they wish to destroy this unity, the Communes, once most favourably inclined, have been set against them. To take any extreme measure, therefore, would be to incur the risk of terrible internal divisions. . . .

But do you know that you speak very lightly of sacrificing your life, and that you seem to have come to this conclusion quite independently of me? How do you expect me to look upon it? Is it decreed that we can only deserve each other by running to destruction? And, if fate should not permit us to be soon reunited, must we, therefore, abandon all hope of ever meeting again, and see only the tomb where our elements may mingle? . . . Adieu, my well-beloved!

Yes; for these two, which the fatality of passion had linked together, while the law of society kept them asunder—who had met in their common love

for the Republic, and been flung apart by her—there remained nothing now but the tomb, to which the Revolution was hurrying them with gigantic strides.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

## IN OUTLAWRY.

ON the eve of the 14th of July, the fourth anniversary of the storming of the Bastile, from which the year of Liberty dated, a tall, beautiful girl, in Normandy cap and simple white dress, stopped at a sombre-looking house in the Rue des Cordeliers, and asked for Marat. She had come from Caen, where she had seen the proscribed Girondins, but without coming into personal relations with them, though she had spoken to Barbaroux, without revealing her purpose.

Marat—who knows not the tragic tale?—received Charlotte Corday sitting in a medicated bath, covered by a board for writing, when she, pretending to bring him news of the traitors at Caen, plunged her knife into his heart.

On the day of Marat's funeral, at which the whole Convention assisted, Champagneux was on his way to Madame Roland in her prison. The honours paid to Marat filled her with violent indignation, succeeded by hopeless gloom. "I shall never leave this place," said she, "but for the scaffold. However, I suffer less concerning my own fate than for the calamities which will overwhelm my country; it is ruined!"

After this she was silent, but roused herself to give Champagneux a message for Brissot, whom she urged in glowing terms to enlighten his countrymen as to the principles and motives of his political career. She knew that nothing else remained ; and the leader of the Girondins, discovered and arrested at Moulins, confined in the identical room which Madame Roland had occupied at the Abbaye, set about composing his *Testament Politique*. This work, according to Champagneux the most forcible of all Brissot's writings, Robespierre managed to destroy. Champagneux seized the occasion of the message to impress upon Madame Roland the importance of continuing her own private and political Memoirs, already begun, but left off again in discouragement.

So Madame Roland resumed her pen, and with her usual rapidity filled in the gray, small-sized sheets of paper with her strong, clear handwriting. How she contrived to hide her manuscript from the gaolers is a mystery. But she had succeeded in taming even the ruffianly keepers of Sainte Pélagie, and to her they were full of little attentions. Two-thirds of her Historical Notices had already been entrusted to a friend, who had burned them, under apprehensions of a domiciliary visit. The author, on learning their fate, could not help exclaiming, "I wish they had thrown me into the fire instead !" Standing on the edge of the grave, not knowing from day to day whether she would have time to finish her story, she entrusted to these frail leaves the justification of her political life. Undismayed by the trying miscarriage of her first MS., she wrote so rapidly that her Notices were finished in the space of a month, and the rest of her Memoirs in about three weeks.

These *Mémoires*, now one of the French classics, contain the narrative of Madame Roland's private life from infancy to the date of her marriage. Modelled on Rousseau's *Confessions*, they yet bear the impress of a strong, original nature. Terse and limpid in style, they are free from that academic sententiousness characteristic of Manon's youthful letters, uniting shrewdest criticism and description of character with the idyllic sentiment so dear to the eighteenth century—a book with a life crushed out on its leaves: the life of a woman in the plenitude of existence, yet already practically cut off from it. The circumstances under which this autobiography was written, give it the strangest pathos. These fresh pictures of childhood, these vernal hours of youth, that seem to scent the pages containing them, are painted on the dark background of a prison. Leaning against the bars of her window, the captive author sees again the bowers and avenues of Meudon, the pleasant garden, in whose arbour of honeysuckle she has sat with her parents on the long-past summer days. As she recalls the convent, with its sacred chaunts and solemn organ-peals, the vision is cruelly dispelled by the oaths and curses with which thieves and forgers interlard their speech. Even while describing those tranquil months passed under her grandmother's roof on the Ile St. Louis, she breaks off abruptly with the remark, "I feel the resolution of continuing my undertaking grow weaker. The miseries of my country torment me; the loss of my friends affects my spirits; an involuntary sadness benumbs my senses, darkens my imagination, and weighs heavy on my heart. France is become a vast amphitheatre of carnage, a bloody arena, in which her own children are tearing one another to pieces."



But while the recollection of early friendships rose from the past "like an old half-forgotten legend," these friends proved the strength of their attachment by coming, at imminent risk to themselves, to visit the prisoner. Now it was the faithful Agatha, poor fluttered nun, driven from her convent, but still roosting near it, that came to lament over her darling. Now it was Henriette, most generous and devoted of souls, who sought her old friend, not merely to console but to offer to take her place. She, a royalist, had seen nothing of Roland's wife since the Revolution had swept them asunder. But misfortune is a great peace-maker. Madame de Vouglans was a widow and childless; the prisoner had an old, suffering husband who needed her care and a young, interesting daughter. What more simple than to propose to die for her—save a useful at the expense of a useless life! Henriette wanted to exchange clothes with Manon, and tried to convince her that, by the time the trick was discovered, she could have made good her escape: a perfectly feasible plan, provided the captive were willing. "But they would kill you, my good Henriette!" cried Madame Roland. "Your blood would be upon my head! Better suffer a thousand deaths than have to reproach myself with yours!" Tears and prayers were of no avail. The thing was impossible. She had no illusions as to her own fate, though she often made light of it to others.

Heroism is very catching. Nothing commoner in the Revolution than this sublime disregard of life. The wave of emotion leaped so high that timid women, who in ordinary times would hide from a thunder-storm, were ready to face the most imminent perils. We have heard quite enough of the horrors of this

French Revolution; we can never hear half enough of the greatness it engendered. The lofty deeds of antiquity fade beside these modern ones; the devotion of martyrs is more than matched by those of republicans; nor does the history of man keep a higher record than that of Condorcet serenely composing his work, *On the Progress of the Human Mind*, while the pursuers were on his track.

So Manon remained at Sainte Pélagie, and the two friends parted never to meet again. But as long as history reserves a niche in her Pantheon for the great French woman, let Henriette keep a place beside her. Passing rich, indeed, Madame Roland was in the love of friends. Champagneux's constant visits had also rendered him a *suspect*, and he was by this time himself a prisoner. Alarmed for Bosc's safety, Madame Roland entreated him not to come so often, and to take greater precautions when he did so. To his care were entrusted the leaves that held the imperishable part of Madame Roland's life, and he took them at the peril of his own, keeping them hidden for a time in the hollow trunk of a tree in the forest of Montmorency. Proscribed himself, later on, a fugitive in the depth of winter, he carried the precious charge with him, and thus rescued both her children: the offspring of her body and that of her brain.

What, by this time, had become of Buzot and his comrades, whom we left enrolled in the company of Breton volunteers, well provided with fire-locks and cartridge-boxes? Madame Roland followed them in thought; lived in hope that they had taken ship to America. "Oh, my friends!" she wrote, "Heaven grant that you may reach the United States—that

last refuge of liberty—in safety! My hopes follow you thither, and I entertain some hopes that you are now sailing towards its shores. But, alas! *I* am doomed. I shall never see you more!” Describing the impression made on her in youth by a novice who, on taking the veil, had sung the customary verse, “Here have I chosen my abode, and will establish it for ever,” she now writes: “I have not forgotten the notes of this little passage, but can repeat them as accurately as if I had heard them only yesterday. Good God! with what emphasis I should utter them now in America!”

Alas! the little band of outlaws was not on the broad Atlantic, sailing westward. Far from it. Would it, indeed, have been possible for Buzot to leave the country where the woman he loved was immured with no prospect but the guillotine before her? He would much have preferred death. But they all of them loved France so dearly, it seemed as though they could not tear themselves from their natal soil. They had left the brave Breton volunteers to strike across country to Quimper, under the escort of six tried guides, thence to take ship to Bordeaux. Nineteen men in all they were, mostly tall and vigorous, armed to the teeth; and, to be the better disguised, clad in those white smocks bordered with red worn by common soldiers on the march. Already the departments had been filled with Jacobin proclamations against the “traitors,” “conspirators,” “federalists”; descriptions of their persons having been sent to all the Municipalities; popular feeling, with the desperate instinct of national self-preservation, had turned dead against them.

Buzot, Barbaroux, Pétion, Salles, Louvet, Cussy,

Girey-Dupré, and a young man named Riouffe, who joined them from sheer sympathy, were among the eleven now starting on this memorable retreat. Across desert moors, along lonely bye-ways, sinking knee-deep in bogs, struggling through brakes and briars, the outlawed republicans for security's sake tramped through the night, sometimes beneath the quiet stars, or under wild skies, where the moon, flying before the hurrying rack, seemed like them to fly from its hunters.

Strange Ulysses wanderings these for men bred up to peaceful professions—authors, barristers, students of arts and science. Afraid to ask shelter at country inn or cottage, they once stretched their tired limbs in a hay-loft, to be summoned, in the name of the law, by a patriotic villager at the dead of night, while flickering torch-light, cast its reflection, now on the National Guards without, now on these desperate men within, determined dearly to sell their lives. A curious colloquy, recorded by Louvet, then occurred between the suspected and suspecting parties. “What are you doing here?” asked the Mayor, tentatively, to whom Barbaroux replied, “We were sleeping.” “But why in a hay-loft?” “We should have preferred your bed,” quoth Louvet briskly. “And who may you be, my lively gentleman?” persisted the Mayor, whom Riouffe answered laughingly, “Why, a tired volunteer, who did not expect to be called so early.” More parley ensued, and while they looked to their fire-locks, a more enterprising inquirer wished to know why they carried such loads of arms. “Because we know that this district is infested by brigands,” replied Buzot, bent on annoying the departmental force, “and we wished they should at least learn to respect what they dislike.” The upshot

of it was that they all set off amicably enough for Roternheim, not without lurking misgivings; but the snoring citizens of that quiet country town, not in the mood for catching rebels at such hours, suffered them to leave its precincts in peace.

But oh, the weariness of the long march! One of them suffered tortures from gout; Barbaroux, limping with a sprained ankle, leant his heavy weight on his companions; Riouffe, bare-foot and blistered, left a bloody trail as he tripped on tip-toe to save his grazed heels; Buzot plodded along heavily, "carrying in his heart such bitter griefs," as Lqûvet knew from "his *chère* Lodoiska," who had carried the solace of Buzot's letters to Madame Roland, and is called by her, "angel of goodness and beauty." Lodoiska, whose heroic devotion to Louvet is so thrillingly described by him, was even now following closely in the wake of the outlaws, risking arrest as *suspect*, driving mysteriously it seemed to the Argus-eyed officials, but able to save herself by tact and presence of mind.

Hunger had added its pangs to the sufferings of the wayworn wanderers. No sooner did they approach a human dwelling, than shutters were barred, doors locked, and people shrank from them as though they were plague-stricken. At last, after dragging along for thirty-one hours at a stretch, they reached the neighbourhood of Quimper, and hid themselves in a woody brake till nightfall. By way of climax to their misery, they were drenched by a thunderstorm, literally bedded in water, and too weary to rise. Even the cheerfulness of them, Girey-Dupré, Riouffe, and the lion-hearted Barbaroux, lost heart for jesting, and had only faint smiles left. Pétion alone remaining imperturbable, steeled against all misadventures.

But some respite to their sufferings was at hand. Charitable friends hid them in their homes. A favourable opportunity having offered, the ex-deputies took ship for Bordeaux, which the ever-rash Guadet, gone off by himself, had depicted as devoted to the Girondins. Alas! their heaviest trials awaited them there. Reaching Gascony at the end of September, they found the Jacobins masters of Bordeaux and of the whole country. The capitulation of Valenciennes, the troubles in La Vendée, the surrender of Toulon to the English, by exasperating the people, flung them perforce into the arms of the Jacobins, who followed a clear if terrible policy of their own. A new Constitution, made under their influence, had been given to the nation, which rallied round it as its last chance of union and security. The proscribed deputies, illegally turned out of the Convention, were now themselves regarded as illegal and unconstitutional, and the Gironde rejected its Girondins.

Ignorant of this state of opinion at first, they had not taken the precaution to hide their identity, but soon found out their mistake. Discovered at an inn at Bec D'Ambez, they just escaped falling into the hands of the Jacobins, for the house had been invested, and, as the report said, *their beds were found to be still warm*. There seemed no safety now but for the little band to dissolve, and so put the hunters off the scent. With sorrowful hearts they bade each other farewell. This great blessing was vouchsafed them, that danger borne in common had tightened the bonds of friendship. Pétion and Buzot, who never left each other "till death did them part," remained roaming about the Gironde, now retired beneath some friendly roof, now hidden in the caverns near St. Emilion. The

others, in groups of twos and threes, vanished along different routes, mostly ending in the guillotine.

Madame Roland at Sainte-Pélagie was not altogether ignorant of these events. She knew now that the proscribed Girondins, those who were not already imprisoned in Paris, would never reach America. This conviction, harder to her than her own impending fate, filled her with despair. She resolved to commit suicide. Several considerations urged her to take this step. She would foil her executioners and escape the last indignity of mounting the scaffold. A most powerful motive with her was that, by doing so, she hoped to secure her personal property to Eudora, which, were she condemned, would be legally confiscated. Having come to this conclusion, she wrote a letter to Roland, asking him "to forgive her for disposing of a life which should have been devoted to him, but that she, having now been deprived of the power of doing so, he would lose nothing but a shadow."

Two months ago, the Citoyenne Roland had declared that she would proudly have ascended the scaffold; then the victim, still able to speak, could bear witness to the truth. Now, deprived of this right, also, she considered it a degradation to submit. A paper to which she committed her last thoughts on this occasion, contains a striking proof of her calmness and minute attention to her daughter's interests. After giving a business-like account of the little property she could claim in virtue of marriage settlements and legacies, she directs that a small sum of ready money shall be laid out in buying her daughter the harp which had hitherto only been hired for her; "and they shall get it from Koliker," she says, "an honest, fair-dealing man, who will, perhaps, abate something of the hun-

dred crowns (£12 10s.) which he has asked for it. Nobody can tell," she added, "the relief that music affords in solitude and misfortune, nor from how many temptations it may be a safeguard in prosperity. Let the teacher of the harp be kept a few months longer; by that time the dear little girl, by making good use of her time, will know enough for her own amusement. Her drawing, also, should by no means be neglected. It is an essential article of education, to which Eudora's care and attention ought to be directed." Taking leave of her in a few lines into which all her tenderness is condensed, she added that proud legacy, "Do what they will, they cannot rob you of my example, and I feel, and I will venture to say, upon the very brink of the grave, that it is a rich inheritance."

The "dear little girl" was not suffered to remain long with the kind family of Madame Creuzé la Touche. How many were the good Samaritans sent to the scaffold in those stormful days for harbouring a *suspect* or a *suspect's* helpless offspring! Blue-eyed Eudora must go forth from the hospitable roof—whither was not so clear. Poor little black lamb! who would gather it to the fold, with that Girondin brand upon it? Every schoolmistress shrank from the charge. One at last consented to admit the gentle child, if for the dreaded name of Roland another were substituted. Even that did not suffice for long in the eyes of quaking citizens, haunted by visions of the guillotine. Eudora, in those months of terror, was passed from hand to hand. But her mother's devoted friends, to whom she had bequeathed Eudora, watched over her. She flourished in secret, although deprived of every sou of her parents' property, and it may as well be



added here that she developed into a sweet and noble woman, such as would have gladdened her mother's heart, that she married the son of the worthy Champagneux, and returned ultimately to the solitary vineyards of La Platière.

Could Madame Roland have foreseen this, perhaps it would have assuaged some of the anguish which she devoured in silence. Serene though she was in the presence of others, the woman who attended her told one of the prisoner's friends that she mustered up all her courage before them, but that, when alone, she would sometimes stand leaning against the bars of her window and weep for hours together.

The idea of suicide was abandoned at the instance of Bosc. He succeeded in convincing his friend that she owed it to herself and her cause to die grandly in the face of all, leaving an example such as must inevitably make its mark on the public.

The year 1793 was on the wane. In the distant Gironde, where the sunny vintage was over, Buzot, still hidden in cellars or caves, was indulging—what survived all shocks of fate with the men of that generation—the passion of writing Memoirs. In pleasure-loving Paris, where the theatres had never been more crowded with elegantly-clad women, hair mostly dressed *à la Titus*, the remnant of the Girondins lingered in close confinement, awaiting their trial.

Much they still hoped of this trial; Madame Roland, also, who was to be called as a witness, indulged in favourable anticipations. In these swift, impressionable times, how might not opinion be turned by the suasive tongues of the eloquent Gironde? She herself would strike sympathy from the stoniest hearts by the fervour of her appeal.

On the 24th of October, the imprisoned Girondin deputies appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Twenty-one in all; for, although some of the chiefs had vanished for the present, other accused persons, not originally belonging to them, had been thrown in to make up the orthodox number. Fouquier Tinville's act of accusation contained an elaborate statement of all the errors and crimes which the Mountain laid to their charge, the sum and substance of which was that they were royalists, federalists, fomenters of civil war, conspirators against the Republic. Amar did not blush to accuse Brissot of having contemplated the ruin of the French colonies because he had made an attempt to emancipate their slaves; of having provoked the assassination of the patriots at the Champs de Mars because he had given the first Republican impulse; of having wished to stifle liberty because he had declared war against kings. The very acts that most redounded to the glory of the leader of the Gironde were turned into the engines of their ruin by the hatred of party. To what end, in fact, dwell on a trial at which their most determined enemies, Pache, Chaumette, Hébert, and others, appeared as witnesses against the Twenty-one—a trial of which the judgment was a foregone conclusion; nevertheless, much to the disgust of the Montagnards and Municipality, it was prolonged from day to day. Vergniaud, who had promised his friends to be the last to speak, could not contain his indignation at the calumnious evidence of a witness. Suddenly roused, he had one of those inspirations of eloquence whose pathos and sublimity had so often swayed the Assembly. The audience, the very jury, were moved sympathetically; that great voice was answered by

tears. A black outlook for the Jacobins, this! They suddenly declared witnesses and legal forms to be perfectly unnecessary; a deputation was sent to the Convention, and the latter, with much dispatch, empowered the jury to cut a trial short when they considered themselves sufficiently enlightened.

At ten o'clock on the night of the 30th of October the accused were summoned for the last time, to learn that the trial was at an end. Madame Roland had not been called. The Jury unanimously returned a verdict of guilty, and the sentence pronounced on the Twenty-one was—Death!

The condemned Girondins could not repress a throb of indignation, a movement of wrath. It was not so difficult to die, but to die as traitors to the Republic! Valazé stabbed himself to the heart, and fell dead. Lasource, turning upon his judges, cried, "I die on the day when the People have lost their reason. You will die when they recover it!" Brissot's arms fell nerveless to his side; his head sank forward; he was not thinking of his own fate, but of the wife, of the three young sons, whom his devotion to the public cause left utterly destitute. Fonfrède flung his arms round Ducos, that young martyr of friendship, who had scorned Marat's mercy, sobbing, "I have brought you to this!" Ducos answered quietly, "Be comforted, friend; do we not die together?" Vergniaud was for taking poison; but there was not enough for all, so he flung it from him in contempt; he would not be divided from them in his death.

As they left the room where Valazé's corpse lay stretched on the table, one by one the condemned went up to him and kissed him on the forehead, saying, "Till to-morrow!" The prisoners in the Conciergerie,

feverishly awaiting the verdict, heard them singing the Marseillaise in chorus on their approach, and recognised the signal of doom. To whatever shade of political opinion the prisoners might belong, the fate of these men, still so young in years—Brissot, the eldest of them being under forty—cut them to the heart.

At midnight a funeral repast was laid out in the dungeon, sent by an unknown friend. Nothing had been forgotten. Delicately prepared dishes, exquisite wines, rare flowers, were lavishly supplied. Sitting here for the last time, the doomed Twenty spent the night together; now conversing with the philosophic calm of a Socrates, now, like true children of Voltaire and Diderot, touching with brief lightning flashes of wit the overhanging cloud of death. Oh! do we not seem to see them sitting there, lit up by bright-burning tapers, passing the wine-cup round, eyes bright with life, still busily talking, singing—breaking off in their songs to talk again of the great passion which makes them one—Republican France! Vergniaud, presiding, surpasses himself in the splendour of his thoughts; the practical Gensonné has nothing at heart but his country's future; leaning shoulder to shoulder, the Ninus and Euryalus of the Revolution feel blest in their friendship; Brissot, graver than the rest, is absorbed in meditation; the republican priest, Fauchet, speaks of that Last Supper seventeen hundred years ago, and of Christ on Calvary; and all the while, like the mummy at the Egyptian banquets, stretched beside them lies the cold corpse of Valazé.

Hark! how quickly the clocks are striking the successive hours of night, and the tapers are burning low,

and the feeble light of this last day of October falls through the grating, imparting a wan look to the flushed faces that have watched through the night. Now Vergniaud is heard saying, "Are we not ourselves the best demonstration of immortality?—we who now are here?—we, calm, serene, impassive, beside the corpse of our friend, in face of our own corpses, quietly discussing, like philosophers, the night or the flash of light that will follow our last breath?"

It is striking ten ; the door opens ; the executioner enters to fetch the victims.

## CHAPTER XIX.

AVE LIBERTAS MORITURI TE SALUTANT !

FIVE death-carts bore the doomed ones along ; among them Valazé, whom no further wrong could touch. Bare-headed, with bound hands, and in their shirt-sleeves, they yet looked like conquerors as, dragged through the streets of Paris, they chanted the *Marseillaise*. The *Vive la République* of the crowd they met with answering shouts of *Vive la République*. Then—as one by one they ascended the scaffold, as one by one their heads fell severed by the swift stroke of its knife—their chorus grew fainter and fainter, till at last one voice only remained singing :

Contre nous de la tyrannie  
Le couteau sanglant est levé.

Then it too stopped—hushed in death was that singing !

When the Girondins left the Conciergerie their heroine entered it. It was the last milestone on the road of the Revolution. Only a fortnight before Marie Jeanne Roland entered its precincts Marie-Antoinette had quitted them for the scaffold ; so that the woman who hated the Republic most bitterly was condemned almost simultaneously with that other woman who had the most adored it. But such was the turbid confusion

of the times that the most heterogeneous kind of people were mixed up together in that foulest of prisons. Great nobles were cheek by jowl with felons; great ladies jostled women of the streets; by a freak of fate the Du Barry and Roland's wife slept under the same roof.

Acutely at first did the disciple of Plutarch suffer from this proximity to the reprobates of society. She was sickened in the day by repulsive scenes from whose sight she could not escape; she was awakened at night by the fierce quarrels of these unfortunates. But oh! miracle of human goodness! Ere long that part of the prison where dwelt Madame Roland had become an oasis of peace amidst this Inferno. No sooner did she appear in the courtyard than the wrangling ceased.

Women, lost to shame, felt ashamed before her radiant purity. To the most needy she gave what pecuniary help she could, spoke to all words of advice, hope, or consolation. In walking she was surrounded by those lost ones, who clung to her skirts, and seemed to regard her as a beneficent divinity, while they treated the once all-powerful mistress of Louis XV. as one of themselves. At this page of Madame Roland's history it is difficult to keep back one's tears. Not from pity for her sufferings, but that the magic of goodness touches the deepest springs of emotion.

The record of Madame Roland's last days we owe chiefly to Comte Beugnot, her fellow-prisoner at the Conciergerie. He could not help acknowledging the intrinsic greatness of this woman, against whom he had entertained a strong prejudice as a female politician and republican. Now that he saw her frequently at the grate of the prison, where many of its inmates

gathered round her, he listened to her conversation in astonishment. So did Riouffe, one of the famous twelve, he who had dragged his bleeding feet across the *Landes* of Brittany, and had since then been incarcerated. Months of confinement had not quenched Madame Roland's enthusiasm nor impaired the beauty of her appearance. Her large dark eyes still flashed and softened with every changing emotion. Her complexion still retained its brilliancy. Comte Beugnot says he found an ever-fresh charm in listening to her, quite as much owing to her captivating manner as to the things she said. They completely differed in their politics, and the passion with which she defended her own views gave him the impression "that she had inspired her whole party with that vehement partisanship which had helped not a little to stir up hatred and set others against them." Riouffe describes her conversation as a happy blending of womanly charm with a great man's energy.

But whatever the differences of opinion, everybody loved Madame Roland, everybody desired her acquittal when she was called to appear before her judges. Comte Beugnot, entrusted with a message for her, lay in wait till she appeared in the passage where she stood at the grate until she should be called. She was dressed with great care that day, and appeared more animated than usual. "Her complexion was exquisite," writes Beugnot; "a smile hovered round her lips. She was holding up the train of her dress with one hand, her other one having been seized by a crowd of women pressing round her to kiss it. Those better acquainted with the fate awaiting her were sobbing, and commended her to Providence. No one can picture this scene unless he had seen it." But we *do* see it; we



hear Madame Roland trying to console the unhappy women, never alluding to her own fate, but gently imploring them henceforth to live together in peace, in hope, and in charity. The old gaoler, who had held his post for thirty years, came to open the grate to her, and wept as he did so. She was going to reply to Beugnot's whispered message, when two turnkeys roughly called her name. At this cry, which would have been terrible to anyone but her, she stopped to shake his hand, saying, "Good-bye! Sir; let us make our peace, it is time." Raising her eyes to his face, she noticed that he kept back his tears with difficulty, but only added, "Be brave!"

She vanished down the dark passage to appear before Fouquier Tinville's judgment bar. Several persons were sitting round a table for the purpose apparently of taking down the proceedings, but they only sat and stared. There was a constant coming and going of patriots. David interrogated the accused; but whenever his questions did not meet with the approval of Fouquier Tinville, the terrible public prosecutor, he altered them and put them afresh. The principal charge in the indictment against Madame Roland consisted in the relations she had entertained with the Girondins, condemned for traitorous designs against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic. The questions addressed to her reached back to a period long anterior to 1789, date of the Revolution. She was clear, explicit, luminous in her answers. Nothing could be more to her taste than to enter fully into the whole course of her husband's and her own conduct from the beginning. Why could she not have produced some of those letters addressed to Bosc and Bancal des Issarts during 1789,

1790, and 1791, which bore such unmistakable witness to her revolutionary enthusiasm?

The purpose of the tribunal was not served by these eloquent replies of the accused, which needlessly prolonged a trial of which the result could not be doubtful. She was told, roughly enough, that she was not showing off her wit at the Hotel of the Interior, and had better confine herself in her answers to a plain Yes or No.

Let us briefly recapitulate some of the leading points, which show the nature of these proceedings.

*Question.*—Was it known to you that Roland, before he entered into the Administration, belonged to the Committee of Correspondence of the Jacobins?

*Answer.*—Yes.

*Q.*—Was it not you who took upon you to compose the letters it was his duty to draw up for the Committee?

*A.*—My husband never borrowed my thoughts, although he may sometimes have employed my pen.

*Q.*—Were you not acquainted with the office for the *Formation of Public Opinion*, established by Roland to corrupt the departments; to bring to Paris a departmental force; to tear the Republic to pieces, according to the plans of a liberticide faction, &c. &c.; and was it not you who conducted the business of that office?

*A.*—Roland established no office under that denomination, and I conducted the business of none. After the decree, passed at the latter end of August, ordering him to disseminate useful writings, he assigned to some of his clerks the care of forwarding them, exerting himself to the utmost in the execution of a law

tending to diffuse the knowledge and love of the Revolution. This he called the *Patriotic Correspondence*; and as to his own writings, instead of promoting discord, they all breathed a desire to concur in the maintenance of order and of peace.

It was observed at this point to Madame Roland that it was in vain for her to attempt to disguise the truth. That her endeavours to justify Roland were ineffectual; fatal experience having only too well shown the mischief that perfidious Minister had done by aspersing the most faithful representatives of the people, and by exciting the departments to take up arms against Paris.

The accused, in answer to the injurious imputations upon Roland, observed that she had only two facts to oppose: firstly his writings, which all contained the soundest principles of morality and politics; secondly, his forwarding all those printed by order of the National Convention, even the speeches of the members of that Assembly, who passed for the most violent in opposition.

Q.—Do you know at what time Roland left Paris and where he may be?

A.—Whether I do or not, is what I neither ought nor choose to tell.

It was here remarked to the accused that her obstinacy in disguising the truth proved that she thought Roland guilty; that she was setting herself in open rebellion against the law. The public prosecutor, Fouquier Tinville, accompanied his examination with such insulting epithets, and put questions so offensive to her honour, that she, who could calmly meet death, felt unable to repress her tears.

But she would not be brow-beaten. Turning round

to the clerk, she cried, "Take up your pen and write." Then she continued: "A person accused is answerable for his own actions but not for those of others. If, during more than four months, Roland had not solicited in vain the passing of his accounts, he would not now be obliged to absent himself, nor should I, supposing me to be acquainted with it, be obliged to make a secret of his place of residence. I know of no law which requires me to betray the dearest sentiments of nature."

Here Fouquier Tinville exclaimed, in a rage, that there was no end to her loquacity, and the examination was closed.

Among the witnesses called, the one whose testimony told most strongly against the accused was that identical Mademoiselle Mignot, Eudora's governess, whose old age Madame Roland had wished to provide for, and to whom she was wont to give a thousand livres a month to expend with Eudora on charity. The cowardly old creature, to ensure against becoming suspected herself, made a few vague statements to the effect that the Rolands had shown much tranquillity at the approach of a civil war, and that Madame Roland, on being informed by Brissot of the capture of Lille, had replied, "I know the good news." The two other witnesses were Lecoq, the man-servant, and Fleury, the cook. They were both so deeply attached to their mistress that their one wish was to share her fate. Lecoq succeeded, but the good Fleury was so distracted by grief that she was dismissed from the interrogatory as not in her right senses.

Chauveau-Lagarde was ambitious of the honour of pleading the cause of the great citoyenne. He went several times to see her, and on the 8th of November

1793 came to discuss the line of defence he would take. Vain measures, in which neither placed any faith; for when he was about to take his leave, Madame Roland, who had been very silent all along, rose suddenly, and, with an air of deep feeling, took a ring from her finger, and presented it to him. "Madame," cried the advocate, much moved, "we shall meet again to-morrow after the trial." "To-morrow I shall have ceased to be," she answered. . . . "I value your counsel, but it might prove fatal to you; you would ruin yourself without saving me. Let me not have the sorrow of having caused the death of a good man!"

She was not mistaken. The proceedings were again nipped in the bud by the jury declaring themselves sufficiently enlightened, for most of these political trials were only a parody of justice. The accused was condemned to death as guilty of traitorous relations with the conspirators of Caen, as proved by the correspondence seized at the house of Lauze Duperret.

Between the sentence and its execution the Revolution suffered no pause. That night of the 8th, as Madame Roland had foreboded, was destined to be her last. It was not given to her, as to the departed Twenty-one, to spend it in a kind of delirium of friendship and patriotism.

Madame Roland heard herself sentenced to death with perfect equanimity, saying proudly to her judges: "You consider me worthy to share the fate of the great men whom you have assassinated. I shall try to carry to the scaffold the courage they have shown." But in the Conciergerie there was mourning and lamentation on that 9th of November 1793, when the wife of

Roland, embracing all the prisoners in her room, bade them a last farewell. To one she would say, "How now, Reboul, you weep? What weakness!" To another, "Nay, friend, am I not going to die for my country and liberty; is it not what we have always wished?"

In the dusk of the short November day, beneath the chill grey sky, the death-carts were bearing their customary load of victims to the Place de la Revolution. Sullen, half-brutalized crowds—to whom dead bodies were cast instead of bread—followed with that craving for strong sensations with which they had been accustomed to watch the racking of criminals. It was the same populace, after all, inured to ferocity through the ancient régime with its Bastile, its *lettres de cachet*, its brutal punishments; the same populace for whose wretched plight the youthful Manon had felt such a pathetic blending of contempt and loving pity.

All her life she had loved this people, even with the love of a mother yearning for her firstborn. All her life she had been ready to shed her blood for it, in the conviction that a new generation would arise which should live to enjoy the freedom for which she was content to perish. That conviction made her passage to the scaffold a triumphal path, and invested her, as she stood in the death cart, with a splendour as of victory. Like "a Star above the Storm" the beautiful woman, serenely radiant, in pure white raiment, with long dark locks falling in clusters to her girdle, fared through the streets of the blood-stained city, an embodiment of all that was highest and purest in the Revolution whose star was now quenched in the weltering storm. By the Quay de la Mégisserie, close

to the Pont Neuf, they passed, opposite the house where Manon Roland first saw the light, where the young republican had envied the greatness of Rome, she who to-day was meeting her doom like the greatest of the Romans. Did the vision of her past life rise before her mind's eye, as they say it does before that of a drowning man's, or did she see the phantom Twenty-one beckon her along the road they had lately gone? She was proud to follow them, carrying to the scaffold a courage as great as theirs.

A courage greater than theirs in reality. For she was not sustained by that love of comrades mutually encouraging each other with their song. In the cart beside her cowered the abject figure of an old man whose teeth chattered with terror. It was Lamarche, a forger of assignats. She tried to cheer him up, and there was a sweet gaiety in her words which at times called a feeble smile to his lips. At last they reached their destination. Who can tell what vistas of eternity had opened out to her on her way thither? Report says that at the foot of the guillotine she asked for pen and paper "to write the strange thoughts that were rising in her." The request was not granted; the strange thoughts went down with her to the silence of the grave.

Yet another request she proffered. The scaffold, too, had its etiquette, and ladies were privileged to take precedence of men in death. The brave woman, wishing to spare her companion the horror of seeing her blood spilt, asked the executioner to let him go first. Samson demurred, it being contrary to custom. But when she said to him, with a smile, "Come, you cannot refuse the last request of a lady," he succumbed.

She waited calmly; and, with her wonted quickness of step, she mounted the short steep ladder leading from the cart to the platform of the scaffold. Then, her shining eyes turned to the colossal statue of Liberty lately erected near it, she said, bowing to the goddess of her worship, "O Liberty! what crimes are committed in thy name!"

Swiftly the axe clanked down; swiftly the heroic heart ceased to beat. It had not once quickened with fear. A witness, who daily haunted the place of execution, has borne strange testimony to Madame Roland's Spartan courage. When her head was severed from her body, he saw two enormous jets of blood thrown up from her mutilated trunk—an exceptional fact, for habitually only a few scant drops oozed slowly from the veins, whose blood had all been driven to the heart by apprehension.

The wife of Roland had said that he would not survive her. She was not mistaken. The news of her execution determined him to follow her. But how? He intended at first to force his way to the Convention, and to make his voice heard of its Representatives before he, too, took the way to the scaffold, which his great wife had trodden before him. But the difficulty of carrying out this scheme made him prefer the simpler course of taking his own life, by which he also mistakenly hoped to secure his fortune to his daughter. The good ladies who had so bravely sheltered him all this time, finding they could not shake his purpose, evinced a truly noble friendship by doing all in their power to assist him in his undertaking. In the evening of the 15th of November he bade them a last farewell; then, in the gloaming, with face set Paris-ward, he rapidly walked along, with the



dead leaves crackling under his feet, and hopes as dead in his heart. What his hand had found to do he had always done resolutely; when the thing was to take his life he was no less resolute. Cato could not have run himself more calmly through the body than this Frenchman; and those who, on the following morning, found the austere old man leaning against a tree in M. Normand's avenue, surmised him to be asleep from his attitude. On his person was this writing: "Whoever thou art that findest me lying here, respect my remains. They are those of a man who devoted his life to being useful, and who has died as he lived, virtuous and honest. . . . Not fear, but indignation, made me quit my retreat on learning that my wife had been murdered. I did not choose to remain longer in a land polluted with crimes."

There lived yet another man on earth whose fate was indissolubly linked with the departed heroine. Buzot—who, in those terrible months of the Red Terror, had been dragging from hiding-place to hiding-place, in company with Pétion and Barbaroux, often exposed to all the inclemency of winter, or crouched half-starved at the bottom of caverns and old wells—was at this time roaming along stormy coves and cliffs of the Western coast, seeking an uncertain refuge. When at last the news of Madame Roland's execution reached the unfortunate Girondin, his despair bordered on frenzy. It took him days to recover his right senses. After this calamity were probably written those moving lines: "I have done! My heart gives way. Oh, God! what remains still to be suffered? What remains there of myself? . . . Vainly do I seek the objects that made life dear to me. Nothing is left but the void of solitude and despair. I can no longer

claim a heart which reciprocated my tender attachment, and revived my life with its gentle flame. All is lost, for ever lost. Terrible words, which plunge me into nothingness ! ”

Buzot, however, went on living as though the parting words of her he loved could have reached him, which was almost an impossibility. “ You whom I dare not name,” she had said, “ you who never lapsed from virtue, despite the most terrible of passions, will you grieve that I precede you to those realms where we may love each other without crime ? There will cease all fatal prejudices, all arbitrary distinctions, all evil passions, tyranny of every kind. I will rest and await you ! ” She bade him not to follow her, but live, if so he might still serve the cause of liberty, but to seek death voluntarily rather than take it from a mercenary hand. She would not bid him farewell. “ From you alone I part not. To leave life is to draw closer together.”

So the unhappy Buzot continued leading his precarious life, “ often without bread, without food of any kind, without clothes or money,” only sustained by the hope of some day “ avenging his friends and his country’s liberty.” But he was not destined to see the fall of Robespierre, though it followed close on his own death, for he and his two companions survived till July 1794. Forced to leave a kind-hearted barber’s shelter at St. Emilion, owing to the increased vigilance of commissioners sent by the Committee of Public Safety, they went forth once more. Mistaking a great crowd of harmless villagers for Jacobin troops in pursuit of them, they plunged into a pine-wood. Barbaroux, in trying to shoot himself, shattered his jaw, was discovered, taken to Bordeaux, and executed.

Buzot and Pétion escaped. But two days afterwards their bodies were found in a corn-field, half-eaten by wolves.

So perished the founders of the Republic, the preachers of the anti-monarchical crusade, and the men whose orator had put their principle into a nutshell when he said, "You think to found the Revolution by Terror; I was fain to see her established through Love." So perished she who was the soul of the Gironde, its highest inspiration, its undying glory—who, sooner than make a truce with murder, led her party to martyrdom; for were not those the true martyrs of liberty who refused to turn despots for her sake? They died like martyrs, too, scorning death for that which transcends death, passing away with that smile on their lips, that rapture in their hearts, which those who sacrifice themselves for a great idea bequeath as the most precious of legacies. We may say that none of those who had sent the Girondins to the scaffold ascended it in their turn with the same spiritual exaltation.

Yes; they all followed, those who had sent or who had suffered them to be sent there. It was the inevitable fatality of their action. The National Convention was the corner-stone of the new State, the visible expression of the Sovereignty of the people, and to violate it was to proclaim the Revolution *en permanence*, to wrest the government from the legally-constituted authorities of the Republic, and leave it at the mercy of every fresh shock of insurrection.

Vergniaud, seeing the irreconcilable breach of parties, had uttered the sublime cry, "Fling us into the abyss," and they were flung. But the abyss did not close. Nay, it widened and widened, though batch

after batch of the revolutionary leaders were thrown in without truce or mercy. Blood still called unto blood, and victims entailed ever fresh victims by the inextricable mesh of circumstance.

All the offspring of the Revolution, the noble and ignoble, the fairest and foulest, followed in turn. The anarchic Hébertists, who had grown bloated on the blood-money of the condemned, were succeeded by Camille Desmoulins and the titanic Danton; revolvers now revolted against the terror, and clamouring for a Committee of Mercy. These clamours were silenced by the guillotine; but their overthrow shook the foundation of the Republic. Still there stood its strongest pillar, the inexorable Robespierre! What ultimate plans of government he nourished we shall never know. Cut off in the middle of his career, this man—who as a young judge had resigned his post from remorse at having condemned a murderer to death, and who not many years afterwards devised the Law of Prairial, the deadly instrument of the Terror by which one thousand three hundred and fifty-six victims perished from March to July 1794—must now always remain one of the enigmas of history. If, as is assumed, he was fain to kill the Terror by the Terror, to fill up the abyss by dead bodies, and so cross over this bridge of corpses into the promised land of a reorganized society, his plan was the most horrible failure. And it is well that it was so. Better that the Republic perished than that it should flourish on such a basis. Robespierre himself fell into the abyss, hurled by the Revolution whose riddle he had failed to solve, and after him came the great Revolution herself.

But though the Republic perished, the conquests of

the Revolution were imperishable. Its proclamation of the equal, natural, and unalienable rights of man have modified the political and social life of Europe. Its many great and vital reforms in the administration of justice, in the distribution of land, in the condition of the peasant, wrought the most beneficent changes in the lot of the people. If the humanitarian principles to which it gave birth were baptised in blood, we must remember that there has never yet in the world's history been a fresh incarnation of the idea without violent convulsions. The passage from a state of brutish degradation, corruption, and misery to freedom could not be accomplished without a mortal struggle. But as the earthquake, which lays cities in ruins, also lifts to the surface of the ocean beautiful islands, which presently a luxuriant vegetation will clothe, and where fresh young life will teem, so this great social upheaval, while destructive of much good as well as evil, raised a new social foundation for future generations to build on and complete.

Not only are the conquests of the Revolution imperishable, but the examples of heroism left by many of its children are among its priceless bequests. Among these examples we know of none greater than that given by Madame Roland in her life and death. Once, in a moment of discouragement while a prisoner, seeing in what her devotion to liberty had ended, she asked, "Was it worth while to have been born for this?" Yes, a thousand times yes, answers history. For in the long, painful process of education through which humanity is slowly advancing towards higher phases of development, the best of systems must remain waste sheets of paper but for the lives of noble men and women capable of transmuting abstractions

into realities. Lives that shall illumine the path where others are groping, kindle the moral energies of men; lives such as Madame Roland's stirring her sex to a generous emulation, handing on, as she falls, the sacred tradition of heroes and martyrs.

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